

Leadership, Values and Gender.

A Study of Icelandic Head Teachers

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Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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Abstract

This is a case study about the values of male and female head teachers in Icelandic schools in the context of an era of educational change. The study's methodology is located within the interpretive framework and informed by the perspectives of social constructivism and feminism. In addition, the theoretical framework is based on theories related to values in leadership, which, in combination with research on leadership and gender, provide the focus for this study. Data collection mainly involved interviews but also documentary analysis. The purpose of the study was to shed light on the interplay between values, gender, and leadership behaviour. This was done by seeking answers to questions about the impact of headteachers' values on their actions, in particular when facing value related dilemmas. Further questions were asked about the influence of gender on headteachers' values and actions. The study provides information about the impact of recent changes in the environment of Icelandic schools, on the role of headteachers. It moreover highlights the gendered nature of these changes and how they may impact differently upon men and women head teachers. The study shows that despite similar values, the position of men and women headteachers is unequal. Several influencing factors were found to contribute to this unequal positioning of men and women, including different careers, discriminatory behaviour towards women, and new competencies, such as computer literacy where more men than women are proficient. The thesis makes a theoretical contribution through conceptualizing and developing a framework for examining the interplay between the concepts of leadership, values and gender and by showing how values, gender and gendered educational discourses, may impact upon leadership actions. It is moreover a contribution to the existing research on education in general and on leadership, values and gender, specifically.

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Dedication

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Glossary

Values	Values are usually seen as having to do with what we see as valuable or desirable. They revolve around issues we perceive as being important and they are believed to impact upon our actions. The concept value is often broken apart into two components, that of 'right' and 'good' which refer to the differences between the "desirable" and the "desired". The values we hold can thus provide the criteria for deciding what is right and wrong, good and bad in human behaviour and human relations.
Dilemma	This is situation in which one has to choose between two things, two courses of action, etc., none of which is favorable or desirable.
Discourse	A discourse can be defined as a certain way of understanding the world or parts of the world. It influences what can be said, who has the right to speak and who is silenced. Discourse thus shapes the way people think and act and is seen to describe or define what is true and natural and it tends to be gendered. It can therefore prove difficult for individuals and groups to think or behave in a manner which is not compatible with the rules set out by the dominant discourse.
Subjectivity	Discourses provide positions from which the subject (such as head teachers) understands the world and herself/himself. However, even if discourses are powerful, subjects are not powerless; they have agency at least within the dominant discourse. As there may be more than one discourse available, the subject might also be able to choose what subject position to activate. Therefore, when individuals act in accordance with these subject positions, they also create their subjectivity.
Agency	Agency refers to the possibilities individuals have of having an impact on their own life and society at large through words and actions. An individual with agency is seen as someone with power rather than being unilaterally shaped by the dominant discourse within which she/he is positioned.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Education, then, is radically, unavoidably, impregnated with values
(Bottery, 1990, p. 1).


1.0 Introduction

This study addresses the values of educational leaders, specifically male and female head teachers in Icelandic schools. The aim of the study is to examine values, in an attempt to explain their influence on head teachers' actions. Particular attention will be given to the impact of values on decisions in situations that head teachers perceive as involving value-related dilemmas.

Until recently, head teachers in Iceland were predominantly men. In the past 10-15 years this has changed, with women now taking up about 50% of headship positions. These women are successors of men who shaped the role of headship from the beginning of formal schooling. At the same time the environment of schools in Iceland and elsewhere in the Western world has been rapidly changing. These changes are seen by many to represent male perspectives and masculine values (Blackmore, 1999; Grace, 1997; Marshall, 1990). A second aim, therefore, is to explore the various ways in which gendered education discourses may impact on head teachers as they interact with school stakeholders.

A third aim is to highlight the importance of head teachers' values for their administrative practice (Begley, 2004, 2005). An attempt will be made to advance beyond mere descriptions of value priorities (Begley, 2003, 2004, 2004; Hodgkinson, 1991) and rather explain what motivated head teachers to let particular values guide them in their decisions and solutions to dilemmas (Hodgkinson, 1978, 1991). In order to explore the gendered implications of the adoption of values, relevant literature on identity- and leadership formation will be discussed.

Researchers have looked at leadership and values and leadership and gender, but rarely have all three variables been examined together. The main purpose of this study is to shed light on the interplay between values, gender and leadership behaviour within the micro- and macro environment of schools. Head teachers' narratives will therefore be



analysed with the help of a model which captures this interplay within, and between, the various discourses of stakeholders in head teachers' environments. These stakeholders are parents, teachers and educational authorities.

The study is located within an interpretative framework, using in-depth interviews as a primary data source, but also involving the analysis of relevant documents. The study is made from a feminist perspective inasmuch as it examines how gender impacts on values and leadership discourses and consequently on the actions of both women and men head teachers. It involves ten Icelandic head teachers in Reykjavík, the capital of Iceland. The number of women and men heads is equal (five men and five women), reflecting the current gender proportion in the city. The study also involves nine deputy heads in the same schools. The circumstances sparking my interest in this particular area will be discussed next.

1.1 The Origin and the Rationale of the Study

The chosen focus of this study reflects the fact that I was a school teacher and a head teacher in Iceland for twenty-five years. Before becoming a head teacher, I studied Educational Administration and graduated with a Master's degree from the University of Illinois in 1982. Towards the end of my time in headship, in the late 1990s, I experienced how the role of head teachers was gradually transformed through new legislation and initiatives by local education authorities. These changes involved greater financial responsibilities, increased accountability, detailed target-setting and closer monitoring by school authorities. In the discussion and debate which followed among head teachers, I observed distinctive gender differences, where more men than women seemed to welcome these changes. Parallel to the changing nature and scope of headship, there was a considerable increase in the number of women head teachers. This experience, more than any other, sparked my interest in looking into the possible implications of the political development and policy-making in Iceland for both acting and aspiring head teachers in what has been called a "managerialist" or a market environment (Begley, 1999; Blackmore, 1999; Bottery, 1998; Gold, 1996, 1997; Gewirtz, 2002; Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe, 1995; Grace, 1997; Hodgkinson, 1991; Thrupp and Willmott, 2003). More specifically, I became increasingly interested in looking into the impact of values on the actions of women and men head teachers, in particular when they perceive themselves as encountering value-related dilemmas such as those caused

by conflicting expectations of school stakeholders. I also wanted to examine whether, and if so how, gender might impact on their values and behaviour.

After entering the Icelandic University of Education in 1999, I had the opportunity not only to lecture on management and leadership and to run courses about women and educational management, but also to do research in these areas. When Ingrid Lunt visited Iceland in 2003 and lectured at the university, she expressed the view that values were a key factor in school leadership and argued that “this is where research is headed”. These words further strengthened my determination to explore values in my PhD studies, which I began in 2004.

The leadership research I had done up to this point neither had a specific gender focus nor examined values. My present study, however, provides me with the opportunity to combine my experience in educational leadership and my interest in the interplay and interdependence of leadership, gender and values. The study will also be an important contribution to the scant literature on the changing role of head teachers in Iceland. It should, moreover, have resonance for other countries where similar changes have been implemented.

Headship is a relatively young profession in Iceland. Until the last quarter of the twentieth century, schools in Iceland were small, often only employing a head teacher with teaching duties and a handful of teachers. The leadership part of headship thus tended to merge with the teaching duties. The typical head teacher during this time was a middle-aged male, a former teacher without management training. In this period the role of head teachers was rarely seen as calling for particular knowledge or skills, other than preferably some expertise in teaching. This may, in part, explain why research on educational managers in Iceland is scarce and research about women head teachers is even more limited. Towards the end of the twentieth century, as the number of women head teachers grew considerably, research in the field of education management began to emerge in Iceland. This research was not gender-specific and most often gender was not included in the research design. For this reason, interested Icelanders have needed to rely on research from abroad, mainly the United States, England and Australia. Much of this literature is relevant in Iceland. It is, nonetheless, important for any society to gain knowledge and new insights from research in order to inform and develop both theory and practice. For a society like Iceland, which boasts of having had the first democratically elected female president as well as sound legislation to ensure equal

rights of citizens, information about leaders' perception of their role, and the extent to which they see their role as enabling them to act in accordance with their values, is of even greater significance.

There is now a growing literature in support of the importance of values in educational leadership (Begley, 1999, 2003; Branson, 2005, 2006, Hall, 1996; Hodgkinson, 1991; Sergiovanni, 2000, 2001; Willower 1999). The relationship between gender, leadership and values is, however, rarely addressed in the literature on management and values. The present study should add new insights and contribute to the development of research on leadership in Iceland and elsewhere. In particular, this study should contribute to the barely emerging body of work on the interplay between gender, leadership and values.

1.2 The Icelandic Context

Iceland is located in the middle of the North Atlantic Ocean and is one of the smallest independent nations of the world. The size of the island is 103 000 square km and the total population is 300 000, of which 200 000 live in the capital, Reykjavik, and the adjacent municipalities. Icelanders have a distinct language and culture of mostly Nordic, but also of Celtic origin. Until the middle of the twentieth century, Icelanders were mainly farmers and fishermen. While the fishing industry remains the main occupation, other sectors, such as tourism and information technology, have come to play an important role in the Icelandic economy. At present, the Icelandic economy is flourishing and Icelanders are now experiencing the rise of financial entrepreneurs, some of whom have become known in international circles. For the first time in Icelandic history, the discourse of the market has become prominent, as is reflected in the media, e.g. in the weekly newspaper supplements, *The Market* and *Financing*, which now reach most Icelandic family households.

Iceland is a republic with a parliamentary democracy. Until 2007, the ministers of culture and education came from the centre-right, the Independence Party. Recently, however, the Independence Party and Social Democrats formed a government. In 1995, a new basic school Act was passed involving considerable changes such as the transfer of responsibility for compulsory schools from the state to the municipalities. This involved further deregulation and new tasks, such as budgeting and school self-review, as well as increased parental involvement, school curriculum plans and professional

development plans. In the wake of these changes came new services which were not prescribed by law but were nevertheless required, such as day care, recreational activities and hot meals, resulting in an expansion of staff, both in number and composition.

Parallel to these changes, and as already stated, the number of female head teachers in compulsory schools (for children aged 6-16) has risen considerably as Table 1 shows. In the city of Reykjavík the number of women heads is even higher or 47% (Vefur Reykjavíkurborgar, 2007). Although this has been a gradual process over approximately 15 years, the most rapid augmentation has been in the last 10 years. Now (2007), 53% of the head teachers are women.

Table 1. Head teachers in Iceland 1993 and 2004

1993		2004	
Female	Male	Female	Male
28	72	44	56

Source: Statistics Iceland

The recent re-structuring of education in Iceland, as in many other countries, has not only changed the macro-environment of Icelandic schools but also the role of head teachers. Hansen, Jóhannsson and Lárusdóttir (2004), found that in the past ten years, the role of Icelandic head teachers had changed from being a predominantly leadership role, with an emphasis on pedagogical issues, to being predominantly that of an administrator. Financial management, day care, catering services, staff appraisals, monitoring, long and short term target setting and other primarily administrative tasks are increasingly taking up the better part of head teachers’ time. This has made it increasingly difficult for them to focus on areas such as pedagogy, curriculum planning or staff development; this is an experience shared by women and men alike (p. 24). This shift towards an emphasis on administrative rather than leadership issues is confirmed in a recent study by Guðbjörnsdóttir (2001). She asked women educational leaders at all educational levels about the prevailing discourse of effectiveness and performance in schools. Her findings indicate that head teachers in compulsory schools (for children aged 6-16) experience the greatest conflicts between the emphasis on performativity, on the one hand and the expectations made of women as educational leaders and administrators on the other. In these two studies, women and men alike complain about

administrative and bureaucratic emphasis at the expense of providing leadership in schools. Moreover, women head teachers in compulsory schools question whether competitiveness and efficiency are compatible with pedagogy, equality and care.

This changing role of head teachers is particularly relevant to women head teachers because there are indications that the rhetoric and ideology of the market, often referred to as a “managerialist” environment, may discourage women from aspiring to headship and provide a difficult climate for them once they are in a post (Blackmore, 1999; Coleman, 2007; Gold, 1996; Grace, 1997; Thrupp and Willmott, 2003). There are, moreover, indications that women may feel greater caution towards the new managerialism and the hierarchies associated with it than men do (Grace, 1997; Blackmore, 1998). Whitehead (1999), examining the administrative duties of four Further education managers in UK, found that they all acknowledged the stress and increased pressure of “the dominant discourse of the new managerialism: competition, growth, survival of the fittest, instrumentality, measurement against objectives, winning against the odds” (pp. 125-126). The distinct masculine character of the dominant discourse of performativity which is now widespread in education management may therefore neither appeal to women in general nor to all men (Whitehead, 1999, p. 110).

The implications of these changes for women are further highlighted by the fact that, as mentioned above, parallel to these changes, the number of female head teachers in Icelandic compulsory schools (for children aged 6-16) has risen considerably. These women are the successors of men who shaped the role of headship from the beginning of formal schooling (Blackmore, 1999; Edvardsdóttir, 2004; Marshall, 1990). If the values that guide practice favour masculine values over feminine, more women than men are likely to face difficulties adopting or adapting these values and implementing them in practice.

These changes in educational policy in Iceland and elsewhere have led to changes in school practice and can be seen to reflect the emergence of a value base different from that of earlier times (Begley, 1999; Blackmore, 1993; Grace 1997; Gewirtz, 2002; Gudbjörnsdóttir, 2001; Hatcher 2004; Sinclair, 1999; Thrupp and Willmott, 2003). Values are social constructs and are reflected in the choice of concepts which dominate discourses at any given time. It is therefore obvious that policies which emphasize values such as effectiveness, efficiency and competition have different consequences for the role of leaders, such as head teachers, than for instance those of pedagogy, care and

co-operation. The current hegemony of a particular kind of masculine values which are seen to be reflected in the former cluster of values has important consequences for practice. It may also be assumed that these values will be acted out in different ways depending on the leaders' own values which will serve as a filter between public policy making and their own philosophical stand on education and the way they perceive their role within it.

When values conflict, they often lead to dilemmas which administrators need to address and attempt to solve. In schools, head teachers are faced with various conflicting interests of many stakeholders, parents, students, school authorities and teachers, as well as their own. At times these conflicting interests amount to value-related dilemmas.

In this study, ten Icelandic head teachers share their experiences of dealing with such dilemmas. In order to analyse head teachers' dilemmas and how they reflect the interests of school stakeholders, I will use an adapted form of Begley's model, 'arenas of administration' (2004, p. 8). Within every arena there are dominant values and discourses on education and leadership. These involve beliefs about the nature and role of education and expectations about leadership behaviour.

Begley's model highlights the various arenas of *self*, *group*, *profession*, *organization*, *community*, *culture* and the *transcendental*, within which administration/leadership occurs. In this study, Begley's seven arenas have been assembled into three clusters: *self* (self and group), *organization* (profession and organization) and *community-culture* (community and culture). These clusters correspond to the societal levels where gender identities are defined and come into existence through relations as people act (Connell, 2000). For the purpose of this paper, Begley's model has been expanded to allow for an integration and examination of the various ways in which gendered discourses may shape and reshape the role of head teachers as they interact with stakeholders within the different leadership arenas. This adapted model will be discussed in Chapter 4.

1.3 Public Policy on Educational Administration

Policy-makers and government agencies promote their intentions in policy documents and legal texts which often include paragraphs which are fundamentally philosophical statements. This is apparent in Article 2 in the Icelandic Education Act, where "the developing of the capabilities of each student to the fullest" (1995) is emphasized in line

with a western tradition where equity and rights have “always been at the forefront of school law” (Willower, 1999, p. 124).

Legislation provides schools with an overarching framework which allows them certain freedom to implement it, depending on countries and cultures. Gold and Evans (1998) point out that schools in the UK are now expected to document their educational values and the school managers are responsible for making them implicit in all the schools’ activities (p. 5). In Iceland the situation is similar, especially in the larger municipalities. In the capital, Reykjavik, many of the schools have publicly adopted and documented a policy aimed at developing specific values on which to base educational provisions (The 2004 and 2005 Annual Educational Report of the City of Reykjavík). Educational leaders “must lead the thinking about ways in which their organization might be at its best” (Bell and Tomlinson, 1995, p. 2) However, like Bell and Tomlinson, (1995) point out, vision and values are not worth much if they are not acted out.

In Iceland, the main changes in educational policy can be traced to the late 1980s, being particularly prevalent in the 1990s, and reaching a peak with the 1995 Education Act (Hansen, Ólafsson and Lárusdóttir, 2004; Lárusdóttir, 1997-1998, p. 13). The main changes involve, financial autonomy, numerous new services, emphasis on conformity of services which often encourages competition between schools and accountability which is secured through tight monitoring. These, and other changes, have lead to an increased pressure on head teachers to run their schools on a tight budget, while delivering quality service and being judged on the grounds of quality output as measured, in the main, by league tables” (pp. 11-13). These policy changes in Iceland, and elsewhere in the western hemisphere, have resulted in a considerable transformation of the macro-environment of schools in Iceland. Simultaneously, the redefining of educational management has become the focus of scholars, as is reflected in special editions of management magazines, conferences and seminars (Ribbins 1999; Hart, 1999). Although the changes referred to are not identical, there are many broad parallels between nations and even continents. Common issues are decentralization, effectiveness, efficiency, autonomy, competition and accountability which more often than not are positioned under the umbrella terms ‘market’, ‘market philosophy’ or ‘market ideology’ (Blackmore, 1999; Gewirtz, Ball, Bowe, 1995; Finnbogason, 1996; Guðbjörnsdóttir, 2001; Hansen et al., 2004; Lawton, 1994; Ranson, 1990; Reay and Ball, 2000). These concepts, and primarily the ideology in which they are enshrined, will be examined next.

1.4 The Market Philosophy

In England, the introduction of the market philosophy may be traced to the 1988 Education Reform Act. Ranson (1990) described and analysed the act and welcomed the shift towards public involvement and accountability, while rejecting the means. He doubted that the “market philosophy which informs the act” (p. 1) would provide the right conditions for active citizenship. Ranson talked about a shift in ruling values from “justice as fairness” to a consumer democracy (p. 5) where pursuit of self-interest is prioritized over collective ones. In Ranson’s opinion, the marketplace is not an appropriate mechanism for education because it is driven by self-interest and can change the goods, the education, and even eliminate it (pp. 14-15).

In Tooley’s (1995) reply to Ranson, he discussed the role of the market in education. In an attempt to counter argue Ranson, Tooley accused him of failing to address the shortcomings of education under democratic control and ignoring the educational benefits of “authentic markets” (p. 21). Tooley did not, however, “rule out the possibility for the government to intervene in some welfare undertakings” (p. 23). He thus accepted that the so-called “authentic market” may only meet the needs of some of its citizens and therefore the state may be allowed to, or have to, intervene to ensure that those who are in the greatest need, because of either poor health, handicap and/or lack of money, are provided for. Tooley, therefore, seemed to be advocating a double system, one for the physically and financially able and a different one for the others. Experience, however, shows that “where market forces and consumer choice have been introduced in education”, they have often been associated with inequalities (Henig, 1994, p. 58).

This theme was taken up by Hamilton (1998) in his article, *The idols of the market place* where he talked about the consumer and the free market. In particular, he focussed on the effectiveness literature which he found “technically and morally problematic” and rejected both “the suppositions and conclusions of such research” (p. 14). Hamilton, in line with Ranson (1990), argued that education was no longer regarded as a site of human investment but rather seen as an item of private consumption (pp.16-17). Hamilton drew parallels between this development and that of the beginning of the twentieth century when Taylorism and scientific management prevailed resulting in what Callaghan called “the cult of efficiency”. In this era, schools, under increasing pressure for efficiency, gave in and applied the ideology of and for the market to

educational settings. The most highly appraised values in this time were “dollar values” and they were being assigned every day by school administrators (Callaghan, 1962, p. 72).

Simkins (1994) took up the theme of the market, maintaining that schools had become increasingly subject to market pressures. Like Hamilton, Simkins was concerned about the powerful discourse of effectiveness. He reviewed some of the recent literature on the consequences of the local management of schools exploring in particular how ideas about efficiency and effectiveness underpin the reform and found that:

It is now a commonplace ... to refer to ‘the three E’s’: economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Economy is defined as the purchase of a given standard of good or service at the lowest cost, efficiency as the achievement of given outcomes at least cost and effectiveness as the matching of results with objectives
(1994, p. 16).

Simkins concluded that local management of schools was one of the key elements of recent education reforms representing in the main “five grand themes” quality, diversity, increased parental choice, greater autonomy for schools and greater accountability. Therefore, leaders increasingly found themselves separated from their staffs in their attempts to meet the demands of external stakeholders for effectively run schools while teachers may feel neglected and left alone with the demands put on them (1994, p. 31). “The nature of schools’ responses to the LMS (Local Management of Schools) seems to depend both on their circumstances ... and on the managerial approaches of their leaders” (p. 31). These needs and demands from the micro-and macro environment of head teachers put them in a position where they may be caught up in a dilemma, between their own values and those of the environment.

In Iceland, Finnbogason (1996) shared Simkin’s worries about the widening gap between head teachers and staff. In his article, *Schooling and the principles of the market* he discussed what he sees as new ideas about the governing of public institutions, based on “market ideology and liberalism” (p. 63). Finnbogason concluded that: “there is an inherent danger that the gap between head teachers and teachers will widen because head teachers need to focus increasingly on economical issues at the expense of pedagogical ones” (1996, p. 74).

This view was confirmed in a study of Icelandic teachers (Hansen, Jóhannsson and Lárusdóttir, 2004) who expressed the view that head teachers now spend more time on bureaucratic chores, economical issues and monitoring of teachers’ work and less on

pedagogical issues. Expressions like “the head teacher is becoming a distant figure” were common among the teachers (2004, p. 29).

Many educational leaders have been socialized into seeing themselves as primarily contributing to a co-ordinated system “for an overarching public good based primarily upon considerations of justice, equity and care” (Bottery, 1998, p. 2). Now these leaders may feel as if that role has been traded for success in a marketplace where the predominant emphasis is on ‘the three E’s’, *economy*, *efficiency* and *effectiveness* (1998, p. 2). This changing role of head teachers may have gendered implications, in particular for women leaders, whose career is primarily in teaching. Their pedagogical knowledge and proficiency in teaching is considerable. Many of the women, however, have little or no administrative experience on an institutional basis. In this current, managerial era, women heads may therefore be experiencing greater difficulties than their male counterparts, who usually have had administrative experience prior to taking on headship. Moreover, many of them entered headship in their early thirties, and contrary to the women, some of them had little or no teaching experience. These changes may also be particularly relevant for the growing number of women head teachers who may feel greater caution towards the new managerialism and the hierarchies associated with it than men do (Grace, 1997; Blackmore, 1998). Lumby with Coleman (2007) highlights these implications in the following quotation:

A managerialist context that stresses accountability, rules and regulations and is driven by market demands affects all those in positions of responsibility but may be particularly inimical to women, discriminating against them through their increasing demands brought about by meeting targets and competition between schools
(p. 50).

There have been various other changes in the external environment of schools, again reflected in different educational emphases and changing policies. Hargreaves (1994) refers to these changes in western educational systems as an expansion of bureaucratic control and standardization in the delivery of their services, an “administrative tendency ... rooted in a monochronic and generically male world of market relations, geared to increasing productivity” (p. 113). Hatcher (2004) addressing recent developments, talks about a government being “engaged in a profound transformation of the school system from a social democratic to a neoliberal system whose primary objective is the production of human capital for economic competitiveness” (p. 1).

Sergiovanni (1998) observes that approaches to changing schools depend on their views about what kind of places schools are. If the perspective is that of schools as market systems, market forces of choice and competition are at the forefront (p. 566). In such systems, there are winners and losers because, as Sergiovanni points out, “the economic man operates alone” (1998, p. 586). This focus on the individual in a market-driven society is endorsed by Blackmore (1998) who observes that the dominant value systems of the market-oriented school tend to focus upon individual choice and competition. Such a market orientation to educational change will reduce many schools’ capacities to deal with issues of social justice (Blackmore, 1998, p. 461).

All these texts address educational values and the structures that governments have developed to serve them. These structures work as a vehicle for the elaboration of educational aims. “It is this legitimate authority of this dominant order of values and beliefs which provides a historical period with its distinctive character and uniqueness” (Ranson, 1990, p. 2).

What these writers are responding to, and questioning, are the values on which governments base their educational policies. For the most part, these revolve around what they see as values of the market; managerialism, effectiveness, efficiency, economy and accountability. None of them accept the market ideology as a mechanism for educational improvement, and some of them question or criticize the so-called effectiveness literature for being theoretically weak and lacking a clear focus as to whom it is intended to serve. Sergiovanni (1996) gets to the core of this debate when he argues that schools are special places, moral learning communities, and that “importing theories from other disciplines does not serve our goals” (xii-xiii). Sergiovanni finds it unlikely that schools will improve over time if people do not accept that leadership for the schoolhouse should be different and develop theories and practices with this in mind (1996, p. xiv).

1.5 Leadership and Values

Indeed, this is perhaps the most pervasive aspect of the hidden curriculum; how a school is managed will have profound effects upon the institution
(Bottery, 1990, p. 126).

The school administrators who play the main role in this study are operating in turbulent and competitive environment (Bottery, 1998; Gold, 1996; Sergiovanni, 2001). Competition is not limited to observable and purchasable goods or services, but also

includes the more covert qualities of life, such as the values which are forwarded in policy texts or highlighted in the dominant discourses of societies. When these values are acted out in practice, the various discourses of stakeholders often compete for recognition. In such an environment of competing values, educational leaders are likely to encounter value conflict situations.

Values in Icelandic policy documents are rarely followed up with interpretations or guidelines, but are left to those in the field, mainly head teachers (Finnbogason, 2004, p. 181). This situation puts new and pressing demands on head teachers. This has been acknowledged and has led to a proliferation of leadership literature where leaders are encouraged to be aware of and reflect upon their values (Begley, 1999, 2004; Branson, 2005, 2006; Cheng, 2002; Gold, 1998, Hall, 1996; Sergiovanni, 2002; Willower, 1999). Such a value perspective is seen as helping educational leaders to become aware of, understand and use their values as a guide in their everyday practice as well as in solving more complex problems.

Considerable research on head teachers' values has been done (Begley, 1999, Begley and Johansson, 2003; Branson, 2005, 2006; Hodgkinson, 1978, 1991, Sergiovanni, 2000, 2001). Now, at the dawn of a new century, studies which touch on the values of women educational leaders have emerged (Campbell, Gold, and Lunt, 2003; Coleman, 2002, 2005; Gold, 1998; Gold et al., 2003; Hall, 1996). These studies have either focused on the articulated values of these head teachers or the way in which they manage to uphold these values in a context of educational change, or both. Implications of these studies will be referred to in more depth in Chapters 2 and 3. Below follows a discussion of the main constructs of this research.

1.6 Leadership, Gender, Values and Discourse

This study will be informed by leadership, values and gender theories. Although the origin of values is a "matter subject to debate" (Begley, 2003, p. 2) it will be assumed here that all the concepts, leadership, values and gender are socially constructed, held by every individual, consciously or unconsciously. It will moreover be assumed that information about these values and their relationship with gender can be generated by research. This may not be 'the truth', but it may be one of many truths (Evans, 1995, p 77).

Values are usually seen as having to do with what we see as desirable, (Hodgkinson, 1978), revolving around issues we perceive as being important in our lives and they impact upon our actions (Gunnarsson and Finnbogason, 2006). Hodgkinson (1991) breaks the “basic concept of value” apart into its two components of ‘right’ and ‘good’ (1991, p. 97) which refer to the differences between the ‘desirable’ and the ‘desired’. These two dimensions are “technically known as the distinction between the axiological (good) and the deontological (right)”. Good is a matter of preference but right refers to what is proper or what ought to be (p. 97). The values we hold can thus provide the criteria for deciding what is right and wrong, good and bad in human behaviour and human relations.

In administration the making of choices is usually termed decision-making or dilemma solving (Begley, 2003, p. 3). In this study head teachers talk about difficult choices they have made when attempting to resolve value related dilemmas. Values and value theories will be further discussed in Chapter 2 but because the concept *value* is a key concept in this study, Willower’s conception, below, about the link between values and administration, is provided here at the outset.

Because a significant portion of the practice in educational administration requires rejecting some courses of action in favour of a preferred one, values are generally acknowledged to be central to the field

(1999, p. 369).

Willower’s description underlines Hodgkinson’s (1991) portrayal of the key role that values play in making decisions that involve judgements about the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ course of action. Such decisions can lead to dilemmas, a situation in which one has to choose between two things, two courses of action, none of which is favorable or desirable.

As mentioned above, gender and values are social constructs. Because gender structures social practice in general, it is involved with other factors, such as class, ethnicity and sexuality, which also need to be recognized as shaping variables (Collard and Reynolds, 2005, p.195). Gender is also deeply and “often unconsciously ingrained within people’s psyches and behaviour and deeply inscribed within the school cultures and education systems” (Blackmore, 1998, xiii). Although there are many grounds on which individuals are discriminated against, such as ethnicity, colour, and age, “when it comes to accessing leadership it is arguably the most pervasive, both through time and across national borders” (Coleman with Lumby, 2007, p. 44). Gender, like values, is liable to

change depending on the historical, social and cultural context. It can be seen as a way in which social practice is ordered, a construct which operates in complex ways at all social levels (Connell, 1995; Mac An Ghaill, 2000; Warrington and Yonger, 2006).

This study is done from a feminist perspective. This involves examining gendered discourses, masculine or feminine, and their impact on head teachers decisions and actions. Discourses are powerful because they determine what is seen true or normal at any given time and dominant discourses reflect the values which are most highly regarded by society. The construct discourse will be further discussed in Chapter 4 in relation to one of the two main analytical tools, Begley's administrative arenas.

All these social constructs in various combinations with national cultures and international influences will impact on the way leadership is carried out in schools. The dominance of an Anglo-American English-speaking perspective within the discipline of educational administration is apparent. Many writers therefore (Begley, 2004; Sinclair, 1999; Walker, 2003) have advocated a cross-cultural perspective where diversity and multiculturalism is acknowledged. Such a cross-cultural view could encourage collaboration and enhance the possibilities of making the development of leadership theory more applicable in diverse cultural settings. It is this complex interplay between gender, race, class, as well as culture, which is now more widely acknowledged and has led to the recognition of multiple gender identities.

While this study is seen as an extension of the above studies on values and leadership, it also attempts to go beyond them. The study will therefore focus less on descriptions of value priorities and more on what motivated head teachers to apply particular values and why. To this end, the values which surface in head teachers' narratives in their dilemmas and examples will be explored. This study also attempts to develop a conceptual framework which integrates gender into the analysis of leadership and values. This is important because while leadership, values and gender are interrelated concepts, they are rarely addressed together in the literature on values and leadership. With the help of relevant literature on gender identity, the gendered implications of value adoption and its impact on leadership behaviour is explored. Data will thus be interpreted through both a values perspective and through the lens of gender. In particular it is hoped that this study will contribute to the database on gender and values and their impact on leadership actions of men and women.

1.7 The Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into ten chapters. Relevant literature will be reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3. In Chapter 2, values and their nature and origin will be discussed and their role in informed choices and decision making of men and women leaders put in the context of educational change. Particular attention will be paid to the possible implications of the 'market philosophy', and the values which underpin it, for the recruitment, career paths and perceived success, of women head teachers. To put this part of the discussion into context, the literature is used to locate women within educational administration as a field of study and practice.

In Chapter 3, therefore, the focus will be on women leaders and their values. To provide a platform for the discussion, the chapter opens with a short review of the development of theories of leadership, mainly in the absence of women, followed by an examination of research on women as educational leaders in the past 25 years. Interwoven with this is a discussion of the social construction of gender and gender identity formation and its implications for leadership behaviour.

Chapter 4 gives an account of the methodology, and methods chosen for data gathering, the analysis and interpretation of data and the reasons behind these choices. The chapter begins with a discussion of theoretical perspectives, in particular symbolic interactionism and feminism, and the research paradigm for the study. This is followed by a description of the research process and the methods used. The chapter also includes a discussion on translation and of important ethical considerations. It concludes with a discussion of validity and reliability, followed by a short summary.

Findings are reported in Chapters 5 to 8. In these chapters, head teachers' accounts of value related dilemmas they have dealt with in their posts are introduced and discussed. Some of the dilemmas are in the form of vignettes. Others are presented in the form of examples which can also be viewed as mini-vignettes. Together the vignettes and the examples shed light on head teachers' experience, and provide rich data on their value orientation and value-related conflicts.

The research questions are addressed in these chapters. Four main themes are presented, one in each chapter, and are examined and discussed either in the light of examples and quotations from the participants or of the vignettes. The vignettes involve a critical incident or value-related dilemma involving the head teachers concerned. In varying

detail, all the data are analysed with the same analytical tools, an adapted version of Begley's administrative arenas (2004, 2005) which involves an exploration of both values and gender, and Hodgkinson's (1978, 1991) value framework (see Chapters 2 and 4).

In Chapter 5, *Whose Policy? What Values? The Restructuring of Schools*, findings relating to the first research question are examined. The first question is further addressed in Chapter 6, *Caring for Self. Caring for Others. The Restructuring of Icelandic Schools. Values of Head Teachers*, where head teachers discuss professional experiences which have touched them in a more personal manner than others have. In Chapter 7, *The Role of Headship. Shaping or Adapting*, head teachers' reactions, as well as the motives behind their actions, are examined with the help of Hodgkinson's model on motivational value bases. Where appropriate, Gewirtz's model on 'New Managerialism-Welfarism' is also applied to this part of the data. Finally, in Chapter 8, *The Fact that I'm a Woman..., The Impact of Gender on Headship* as perceived by the head teachers, is examined using Begley's adapted model (mentioned above). Particular attention is paid to the women who have been entering headship as successors of men in a time of educational re-structuring. Each chapter ends with a short summary.

The findings are discussed in Chapter 9. This discussion is divided into two main parts. The first primarily discusses the research findings with respect to the new services, some of which have required new competencies and skills. In this part, *Re-Structuring of Education*, an attempt is made to interpret the implications of these changes for the head teachers. This discussion highlights the different, and often conflicting, demands that head teachers meet from school stakeholders. In the latter half of the chapter, the focus is on the gendered dimensions of change, and their impact on the head teachers. Head teachers' different careers and the experiences that have shaped them have had an impact on the way they see schools and schooling. However, the findings suggest that the head teachers who participated in this study were not aware that the changes they have experienced could affect them differently depending on their gender or on the gendered discourses on education and leadership.

In Chapter 10, the final chapter, the findings are summarized with a short concluding discussion about change, and the three interrelated constructs of *leadership*, *values* and *gender*. The chapter also includes reflections on some of the contributions, and limitations, of this study to existing research on leadership, values and gender and its

benefits for me as a researcher. Finally the chapter includes some recommendations for policy and practice as well as for further research.

Chapter 2

Values

2.0 Introduction

Although Hodgkinson does not provide recipes for success, nor yet a prescription for “effectiveness”, he does show that administration can never become good in any meaningful moral sense until theorists and practitioners alike are willing to regard the depths of power-driven choice, the uncertainties inherent in them, and in the ensuing responsibilities, that fall upon themselves

(Greenfield, 1991, p. 3).

In this chapter and the next, values and their nature and origin will be discussed and their role in informed choices and decision making of men and women leaders will be put in the context of educational change. The discussion involves an examination of head teachers’ values, and particular attention will be paid to the possible implications of the ‘market philosophy’ and the values which underpin it, for the recruitment, career paths and perceived success, of women head teachers.

In the past 15-25 years, research on values has grown considerably. However, this research has rarely offered an in-depth examination of values and leadership. Begley (1999), acknowledging the limitations of recent value research, observes that “when administrative values have been researched, the findings usually have been limited to descriptions or lists of value types” (p. 238). In this study, therefore, the emphasis will be on advancing beyond mere descriptions of values or value priorities (Begley, 2003, 2004, 2005). The main purpose is to show how head teachers’ behaviour can be understood in terms of their values and their motivational bases in interaction with those of the environment, such as teachers, parents and policy makers. This will be done by examining value-related decisions by head teachers. Head teachers discuss critical incidents which some of them refer to as ethical dilemmas, thus highlighting the role of administrators as moral agents (Begley, 2005).

Values, their origin and their gendered nature, and also the manifestations of dominant values by individuals and society, will be examined. This will call for an examination of the interplay and possible conflicts between head teachers’ values and those of their working environment. This involves the values informing formal school policy, those of scholarly work on educational leadership and the values of school stakeholders, such as

parents and teachers. Thus, head teachers' perceptions of, and responses to, the dilemmas they encounter in the professional context of their role will be examined.

While several theoretical perspectives on values and leadership will be discussed in this chapter, the focus is particularly on five of them: cognitive approaches to leadership as presented by Hart (1999); dimensions of leadership as elaborated by Sergiovanni (2001), Begley's 'onion metaphor' (2003), his model of 'administrative arenas' (2004) and Gewirtz's (2002) clusters of characteristics of two ideal type discourses of headship, 'welfarism' and 'new managerialism'. Hodgkinson's value framework is referred to but will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. These perspectives will also be linked to relevant work of other scholars.

Hart provides the overall framework of the research, the cognitive approach, encouraging an in-depth examination of leadership and values. Sergiovanni's dimensions help to visualize thoughts, actions, and values of head teachers in an unorthodox, but palpable manner. Gewirtz's two ideal discourses of headship (2002), 'welfarism' and 'new managerialism' are helpful for exploring to what extent the Icelandic head teachers accept, or are in agreement with, the current re-structuring of education. Begley's 'onion metaphor' will show where values fit in as components of human nature (Begley, 2004, p. 6) and in combination with Hodgkinson's value framework it will shed light on what motivates people to apply a particular value (1991, p. 57). Finally, Begley's 'administrative arenas' integrate administrative theory and values theories and allow for an examination of the conflicts which emerge through the discourses of the various school arenas.

These perspectives complement one another and together they facilitate an understanding of values and their links to educational leadership. Where relevant, these models and concepts will be referred to in the analysis of data.

Only two of these models are, however, the main tools of analysis: An adapted form of Begley's model 'administrative arenas' (2003), in conjunction with the construct *discourse*, and Hodgkinson's value framework, 'typology of values'. Begley's adapted model will allow for an examination of values and value-related conflicts as well as the impact of gender on head teachers' actions. Hodgkinson's model will unravel the motivations for the values which impact on head teachers' decisions. Both these models will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

Both the choice of subject and the focus of the study reflect the recognition that for every leader it is essential to understand how values reflect underlying human motivations and can shape subsequent attitudes, speech and actions. It follows that educational leaders need to reflect on, and know, their own values and ethical dispositions in addition to being sensitive to those of others (Begley, 2005; Branson, 2006; Hodgkinson, 1991; Sergiovanni, 2001; Willover, 1999).

The chapter is divided into five main sections, which are further divided under sub-headings. The discussion begins with *Values: Conceptions and Models*, involving a discussion of several theoretical conceptions and models on values and leadership, many of which were mentioned above. Section 2.2 *Values and Value Related Concepts: Definitions and Descriptions* contains an examination of the concept *value* and the main value-related concepts. Section 3, *Dominant Values and Gender*, examines the interplay between national cultures and individuals' personal values and addresses the persistent questions concerning universal and dominant values. In section 4, *Values as a Guide to Administrative Practice*, the importance of values in leaders' everyday practice, and also in situations where they face value-related dilemmas, is discussed. The last part of the chapter, *Values of the Micro-Environment of Schools*, highlights the main changes in the environment of schools and how these changes may be affecting male and female head teachers. In this section, Gewirtz's two ideal discourses of headship (2002), those of 'welfarism' and 'new managerialism' are discussed because of their relevance to the topic under discussion, that of the macro-environment of schools.

2.1 Values: Conceptions and Models

Modernism has depersonalized and dehumanized schools and the leaders who inhabit them by robbing them of any voice of morality or moral values
(English, 2003, p. 28).

In a time of rapid social change, social justice and the ethical aspects of thoughts and actions need to be highlighted. Starratt (1995), addressing present reform efforts, reminds educators to respond to them morally. "Rather than a mindless obedience to the 'authorities' – whoever they may be – the response to the call for school reform requires the moral leadership of school administrators" (p. 106). Gardner (1995) expresses the hope that, despite many horrors of human history, it is possible to "point to a gradual emergence of more sophisticated ways of thinking in the areas of morality and civility" (p. xi).

Looking at the underlying motivations of values is in line with the call for an in-depth analysis of the role of leaders. Neither knowledge nor skills are seen as going sufficiently deep to explain or account for the kind of leadership which is seen to be preferable at any given time. Hart (1999) argued that in the 1980s and 1990s the knowledge base for educational leadership came to rely more on cognitive, rather than on behavioural psychology, which had been dominant since the 1950s (p. 323). After all, the arena in which leadership necessarily occurs is the human mind, or the human minds of leaders and followers collectively (Gardner, 1995, p. 15). Because cognitive approaches focus explicitly on the thinking process of individuals, the focus is now on exploring how managers think, what they think about and how their thoughts relate to their actions (Begley, 2004, 2005; Hart, 1999).

Simultaneously, many philosophers have claimed that beneath all ideas about leadership are beliefs and values that highly influence which ideas and what ideologies and theories prevail or are developed at any given time. The values are manifested in policy documents, legal texts, curricula, speeches and management training and are reflected in words and actions of individuals or groups. Instead of focusing primarily on how the leaders behave, attention is now shifting more to what goes on prior to action, the thinking processes and what influences them. Moreover, a knowledge of how values reflect underlying human motivations and shape subsequent attitudes, speech and actions is seen as essential for any leader (Begley, 1999, 2004, 2005; Branson, 2005, 2006; Hodgkinson, 1991; Sergiovanni, 2001; Willower, 1999). In order to understand leadership, a more in-depth analysis of the role of leaders has therefore been suggested.

This cognitively based approach to research and practice is closely tied to professional reflection, which is believed to improve both theory and practice of administrators (Schön (1987). Recently, scholars such as Reeves (1998) and Begley (2005) have encouraged leaders to reflect upon their management experiences and use them as a basis for learning and developing professionally and personally. Professional reflection is also vividly described through the image of ‘scruffies’ (Sergiovanni, 2001, p. 43), educational managers who see educational administration as resembling a , ‘craft like science’ (p. 43) within which practice is characterized by interacting reflection and action episodes. Many administrators see theory and research as important sources of knowledge, allowing for the use of knowledge to inform, but not to prescribe, practice (p. 43). Others may base every action on theory or reject the importance of theory to practice entirely. What follows are the ideas and models of scholars whose work I find

of particular relevance for this study and all of which offer an in-depth examination of leadership and values from various perspectives.

2.1.1 The Head, Hand and Heart of Leadership

In his book *Moral Leadership* (1992, p. 6), Sergiovanni asked himself the question, “What is leadership anyway?” In his opinion, the definitions that have dominated the leadership literature in the past fifty years may not be adequate any longer. These, he claims, have focused on the leader’s behaviour and her/his ability to match that style to the needs of subordinates (p. 7). Sergiovanni may not have been primarily concerned about women leaders in this regard, but an in-depth examination of thought processes and values should shed light on women’s and men’s actions from a cognitive, rather than a behavioural, point of view.

Sergiovanni argues that even if the charting of leadership actions, which he refers to as “the hand of leadership” has some value, it does not tell us what leadership is all about because leadership comprises three important dimensions: one’s *head*, *hand*, and *heart* (Sergiovanni, 2001, p. 343). In order to understand the depth of leadership, Sergiovanni suggests that we look not only at the hand, but at the heart and the head as well. Figure 2.1 offers a graphic description of Sergiovanni’s conceptualization. To further highlight the implications of Sergiovanni’s metaphor for understanding leadership and its links to knowledge, two dimensions, those of mind-action-feelings and epistemology-practice-ontology, have been added to his conceptualization.

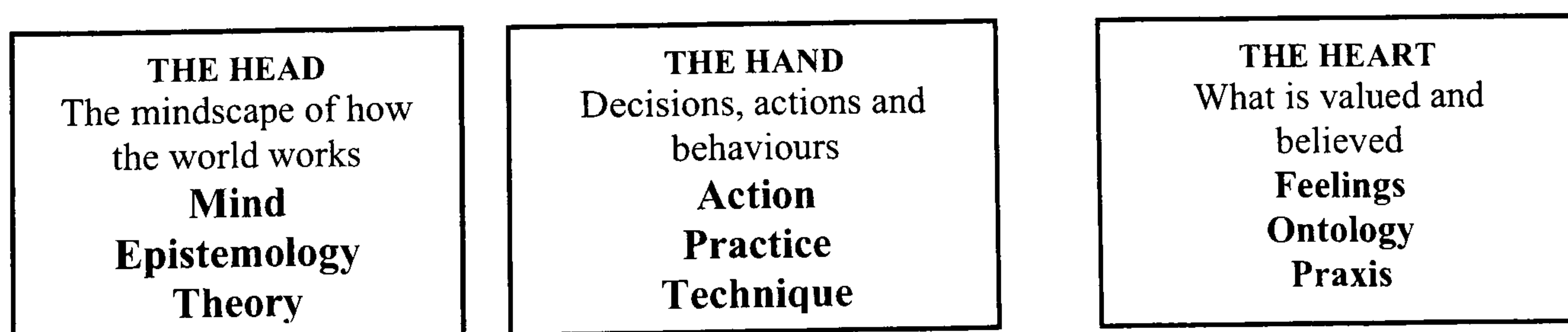


Figure 2.1 The Head, Hand and Heart of Leadership

The *head* of leadership has to do with the theories of practice the leader has developed over the years and her/his ability to reflect on the situations she/he faces in light of these theories. In other words, the ability to let these theories inform practice. This process of reflection (the head) combined with their personal vision (the heart) becomes the basis for leaders’ actions. The *head* in Sergiovanni’s metaphor can thus be seen to represent the head teacher’s epistemological stance. The *hand* of leadership has to do with the decisions and actions which are reflected in behaviour (Sergiovanni, 2001, p. 343). This

can be seen in school curricula, plans of various sorts, policy-making and work processes. This dimension reflects the head teacher's practice. Last but not least, the *heart* of leadership refers to what a person believes, values, dreams about and is committed to. The heart can be seen to represent the ontological dimension of leadership. Greenfield, (1991, p. 5, quoting Pascal), observes that "the heart has reasons, reason knows nothing of".

As discussed above, Sergiovanni sees leadership as comprised of three dimensions which he calls the *hand*, representing action-speech; the *head*, representing the mind or thinking processes and theories of practice; and finally the *heart*, which he sees as the location of the beliefs and values the leader holds. These dimensions have resonance with Aristotle's 3 ways of knowing or three modes of actions which Hodginson (1991) describes as *theory*, *technique* and *praxis* (pp. 42-43). According to Hodginson, Aristotle's "intended praxis to mean ethical action in a political context".

If Sergiovanni's dimensions are applied to this study it would fall into the category of the heart. This interpretation may, however, be an oversimplification, or at worst, dangerous, because linking values up with the heart may encourage the dualism of heart/emotions/women versus hand/actions/men. Sergiovanni's model is included here, however, because it not only offers an unorthodox way of looking at leadership but also one which is vividly graphic. Last but not least, as discussed above, his conceptualization helps to understand how leaders may position themselves in relation to theory and practice.

Begley (2004) has developed a model, a 'value syntax' or 'onion metaphor' which helps to conceptually situate values within a person's being (pp. 5-7). Such an approach leads to a better understanding of the relationship of values and actions. The model is particularly helpful in analysing the relationship between values and actions when facing barriers or when attempting to resolve value conflicts. This model will be examined next.

2.1.2 Values Location in the Human Psyche

In order for values to further an understanding of a person's actions, or to be used as an analytical tool, it is important to try and visualize their location in a person's psyche and their connections to its other parts. Begley (2004) uses an onion as a metaphor to

graphically shed light on the layers in which values are enshrined. Figure 2.2 illustrates his conceptualization.

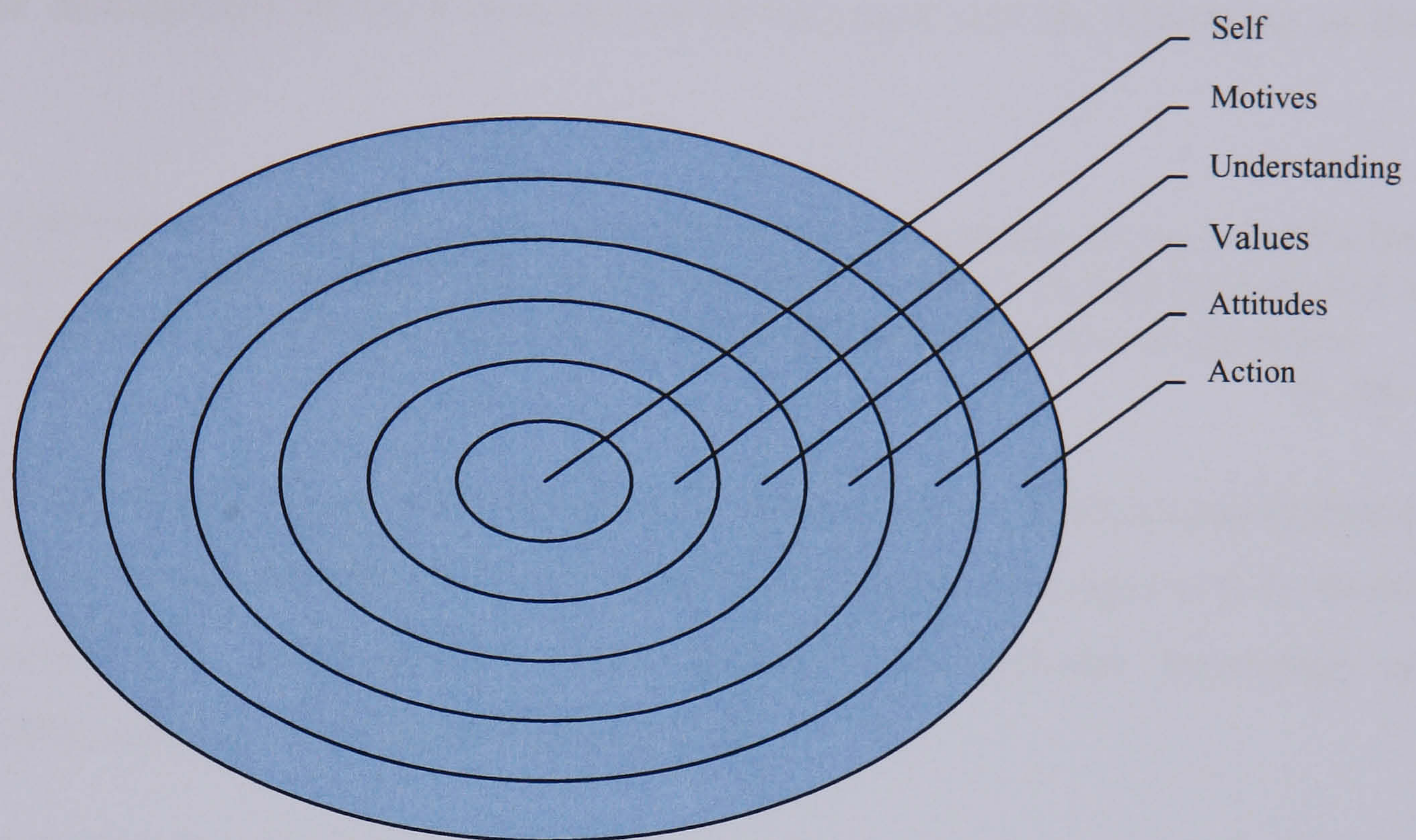


Figure 2.2 The Onion Metaphor

The first layer, *action*, represents observable actions and speech of an individual or the hand in Sergiovanni's conception. The second layer represents *attitudes* which can be seen as a membrane between values and the observable actions or speech of an individual and can also be seen as the predisposition to act specifically as a result of values or value systems acquired previously and elsewhere. The third layer, *values*, represents a conceptual placeholder for the actual values held by an individual. Here, it must be remembered that individuals can deliberately or unwittingly articulate one value while being committed to another (Begley, 2004, p. 6). Therefore, it becomes important to find out the actual level of commitment by looking two layers deeper into the onion figure, at the motivation of the individual for manifesting a particular value. "It is the innermost layers of the onion figure, the *motive* and the *self*, that provide the key to understanding the nature and influence of values on life in general and administration in particular" (p. 7). In this study, the vignettes and the examples of value-related dilemmas are intended to provide the necessary depth to reveal or uncover the actual personal values on which head teachers base their decisions. In a recent study, Branson (2006) has taken this idea further to include early life experiences which may have triggered the adoption of particular values.

While Begley writes about the role of the innermost layers, the *motive* and the *self*, Fredrich Glasl (1997) talks about “physical triggers” for actions which are countered from what he calls “the spiritual side” with ideas and motives for action (p. 86). Citing Steiner, he distinguishes between motives, on the one hand, and the will-factor on the other.

In any particular act of will we must take into account the motive which provides the mental picture which Steiner terms “moral intuitions” which will then later receive a clearer outline and the driving force which is the will-factor in action or for action (p. 86).

The motive for manifesting a particular value is thus gradually visualized and becomes a driving force for action. One source for such mental pictures or images is to be found in the fourth layer, *understanding*, which represents the available knowledge or understanding which we have acquired through life.

The contention here is that as a result of experience, training and/or reflection, an individual responds to basic motivations by adopting particular value positions that will support the fulfilment of that basic motivation in a specific way (Begley, 2003, p. 7).

The last layer, however, the one in the absolute centre, is the *self* which, according to Sergiovanni’s metaphor, can be seen to represent, or be located in, the heart. In Begley’s opinion (2003, p. 8), not much is known about this “inner core of the individual. ... the soul or the life force or spark of life”, yet he describes the self as the essence of the individual, referring both to the biological self and the existential or transcendental self (p. 8). Similarly, Wilber (1998) sees the self as the centre of awareness, detached from one’s personal body, mind, feelings and emotions (p. 36). “To remain as one’s self is to enter the heart” (p. 29), which should leave no one in doubt as to the location of values. In a similar manner, Sinclair (1999), focusing on the nature of leadership, argues that:

... the construct of leadership cannot simply be understood as a rational response to a well-articulated problem For leaders and followers leadership is a mythical construction, fulfilling emotional and spiritual needs which have strong cultural and collectively constructed roots (p.16).

These last citations may have diverged somewhat from the more traditional path of leadership conceptions, yet all these writers offer concepts and ideas which can help to explain the antecedents to motivations for action. Together, these different, but

overlapping concepts and models, serve the purpose of looking beneath the surface, asking probing questions about intentions, motivations and values and how they influence action.

In order to examine the sources of value conflicts in the broader, interactive environment of administration, Begley has developed yet another model, that of ‘arenas of administration’. He points out (2004, p.10) that thinking in terms of the arenas of administration serves at least two important functions. It shows how values can be derived from multiple external and internal environmental forces and it identifies the potential sources of value conflicts. Value conflicts can occur within a single arena of administration as well as between arenas. For instance, head teachers’ personal values may conflict with those of other stakeholders in administrative arenas. As mentioned before, I have adapted this model for the purpose of this research. This adapted model is discussed in Chapter 4. Below, however, follows an examination of Begley’s model.

2.1.3 The Model ‘Administrative Arenas’

The administrative arenas, mentioned above, integrate administrative theory and values theories in a meaningful and practical way. They moreover capture both the micro-, and the macro environment of schools. The model will therefore allow for an examination of conflicts in the broader, interactive, environment of administration and show how conflicts emerge through the discourses of the various school arenas. Applying such a wide lens is particularly useful for this study, where leadership actions are explored in the context of the wider community of schools. I will also apply the construct *discourse* for the purpose of examining the interplay between the three dimensions of this study, leadership, values and gender. Such an examination can identify how individuals such as the head teachers in this study, may be understood as constituted and identified through either dominant or subordinated discourse (Whitehead, 1999, p. 115). As already stated, more detailed discussion of the concept discourse is provided in Chapter 4 in relation to the examination of the adapted version of Begley’s model.

Begley’s model further portrays school leadership as a phenomenon involving at least seven arenas where administration/leadership occurs. These are the arenas of *self*, *group*, *profession*, *organization*, *community*, *culture* and *the transcendental*. Using the onion metaphor again, Begley presents the arenas in the form of an onion where each layer represents a particular arena, starting with the self in the centre.

The construct *discourse* further provides a means of understanding the processes of power and resistance that might occur in administrative arenas. From a post-structuralist view individuals are constituted by power relations (Crotty 2003). Power is not static or stable, it is fluid and fluctuates in time and location. At the macro-level, dominant educational discourses are gendered as well as biased by other defining social constructs such as ethnicity, social class and sexual orientation, leaving individuals with unequal access to power. The main purpose of the application of these analytical tools is to reveal main sources of value conflicts within and between arenas, as well as within and between competing gendered discourses.

The values of those who occupy these different arenas, such as parents, teachers, students, legislators and head teachers, are not always compatible with each other. Head teachers must be able to deal with differences and bring conflicts to a satisfactory resolution because responding to value conflicts is “the new reality of school leadership” (Begley, 2004, p. 15). Conflicts have many sources and the concept often means different things to different people. Usually, however, *conflict* refers to a struggle between people expressed through their interactions. “The relationship between power and conflict is contingent upon the individuals who are attempting to realise different and irreconcilable interests” (Wallace and Hall, 2003, p. 92).

In Begley’s model, the *self* represents the arena of the individual, *group* represents the groups, such as family, peers and friends and acquaintances and *profession* represents a more formal arena of administration. *Organization*, the fourth layer from the centre is usually the arena of most concern to academics and practitioners in the field of educational administration (Begley, 2004, p. 9). In Begley’s model, two arenas, those of culture and community, are described almost as if they are one and the same arena. Begley (2004) sees these arenas as having become highlighted as relevant arenas of administrative activity in the previous decade (p. 10).

Begley does not elaborate further on what constitutes the individual administrative arenas. In Chapter 4, where the adapted version of Begley’s model is presented, the most relevant concepts for this study, *self*, *organization* and *community-culture*, are discussed. Below, however, is a discussion of the concept *value* and some of the concepts which most often are discussed in relation to values.

2.2 Values and Value-Related Concepts: Definitions and Descriptions

The literature on values, as well as everyday language, reveals that there are many value types. There are individual values or personal values, universal values, social values, ethical values, managerial values, gendered values, good values and bad and right or wrong values. Many of these value types will be referred to in this study, but it is the personal values of head teachers which are the focus of this research.

In everyday language, the meaning of the concept *value* is transparent, referring to the worth of something, indicating how much we value a thing or a concept (Árnason, 2002; Böðvarsson, 1976) or the size and nature of something (Orðanefnd, 1986). Our values matter. What we see as valuable becomes the centre of our life and a foundation on which we base much of our everyday life (Bjarnason, 2003).

Values have been defined by many, such as Hodgkinson, who sees them as “conceptions of the desirable with motivating force”, (1978, p.105). Hodgkinson’s definition of values as something we see as desirable and important is common in the work of other writers on values. For instant, Gunnarsson and Finnbogason, (2006) write: “Values are usually seen to revolve around the issues we perceive as being of importance in our lives and worth fighting for... . They impact upon action” (p. 46).

Values tend to be stable and therefore people are often unwilling to negotiate or compromise with respect to them (Maiese, 2004). It is therefore understandable that people may easily change their minds and even their beliefs while finding it harder to change their values even if they, like other social constructs, are liable to change.

As mentioned before, the basic concept of value has two components: ‘good’, (axiological), and ‘right’, (deontological), (Hodgkinson, 1991, pp. 97-98). *Good* refers to a matter of preference but *right* to what is seen as proper, moral duty or what “ought” to be. *Good* does not cause internal conflict but has the potential for external interhuman value conflict because of the competition for limited resources. *Right*, on the other hand, “is the one which really causes the trouble, and is logically different because people have a sense of collective responsibility, a conscience (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 98). Therefore, at the personal level, this gives rise to a kind of internal conflict because the self pulls from one side and the demands of the situation from the other.

In the management literature, values are most often referred to in relation to definitions of school culture, where culture is seen as “shared values, norms, beliefs, and ways of thinking” (Hoy and Miskel, 2001, p. 27). However, scholars on different sides of the Atlantic seem to attach a somewhat different meaning to the term, a fact acknowledged by Begley who explains that “In the school leadership literature, particularly among North American scholars of educational administration, it is common to use the word ethics or moral as an umbrella term for anything that relates to values” (2003, p. 4). In contrast, for others, such as Begley himself (2003), it is values, rather than ethics, which is as a generic umbrella term for “all forms of conceptions of the desirable” (p. 4). The values we hold can thus provide the criteria for deciding what is right and wrong, good and bad in human behaviour and human relations.

The noun *ethics* is usually defined as the study of moral practice, (Starratt 1998, p. 6) giving guidance as to what could count as ethical or unethical thinking and action or as the discipline of human conduct (Rebore 2001, p. 5). The Oxford Dictionary (1998) defines the adjective *ethical* as either related to morals or ethics or morally correct. It can also refer to behaviour which is seen in accordance with principles of professional conduct. These two definitions do not exclude, but rather complement, one another.

In line with Begley, I find it helpful to use the concept *value* as an umbrella term. Assigning such a position to the concept sheds a light on how values are related to other concepts and facilitates the common pairing up of values with other concepts such as personal or ethical values, which are under examination here.

2.3 Dominant Values and Gender

The culture into which individuals are born influences them and therefore individuals’ values and beliefs and actions must be understood within the context of a particular social world. Systems of meaning and ways of thinking often differ from one culture to another and therefore people from different cultures typically develop different ideas about morality and the best way to live (Maiese, 2004, p. 2). Cultures, even the western ones, may therefore hold different views on many issues, one of which is gender and equality. Hofstede (1998) has found that the concepts masculinity and femininity are one of five empirically derived dimensions of national culture and (p. 5) “that other things being equal, men tend to stress ego goals more and women tend to stress social goals more” (p. 11). In a similar manner, Stelter (2002) has pointed out that the impact

of national cultures on expectations of self and others remain an issue because countries whose cultures value masculine styles may be holding up male norms as the “best practice” (p. 4). If cultural values have an impact on individual and group behaviours, then it may be argued that these values would also have an impact on leadership behaviours and subordinates’ perceptions of them. This behaviour will often be manifested at an early age through the various gendered experiences young boys and girls have. It seems likely that Iceland would fall into a category with the other Scandinavian countries which score among the lowest of 40 countries on the masculinity index (Hofstede, 1998) but as this has not been studied empirically, this remains a speculation.

In spite of the differences, nations such as those of Scandinavia and Northern America, many European countries, Australia and New Zealand have much in common. This is why a new educational policy in one area often spreads quickly and is adopted in other areas and nations. The current globalisation increases such development considerably. The ideology of the market and managerialism is a case in point.

These issues and debates highlight the importance of examining the role and influence of the parliament as a policy-making agency. Policies are not epidemical, even if they can spread rapidly. They come into existence through policy-making and legislature. While the state has been part of ethical thinking since the time of the ancient Greeks, its contemporary importance has been underscored by various concerns such as individual freedom, justice and equity (Willower, 1999, p. 121). A persistent question commonly addressed by philosophers, is whether the state has a role in deciding on which values to base society. To some extent, it already has a role in most societies, through legislation which is intended to give this kind of guidance. The question remains how far this should be taken and whether it is possible to find a common ground in relation to values.

The notion that a national culture shapes the values of its constituent institutions, and citizens, raises questions as to whether there are nonetheless some international values which are globally indisputable. Many contemporary writers on values have contributed in various ways to this debate. It has already been established that values may be seen as a generic umbrella term and that there are many value types (personal, professional, ethical, etc.). One type of values is ethical principles (Hodgkinson, 1991); these are well-established values that have acquired acceptance through use and experience.

These, Hodgkinson says, are values which have been developed through collective ethical inquiry and knowledge and serve as a guide to moral choice although they are not treated as absolutes. In a similar manner, Willower (1999) argues that although there are no absolute principles “there is a reasonably good agreement on general goods and evils or general principles” which he takes as a sign of cumulative moral knowledge (p. 134). Willower points out that “in the abstract” there is agreement about the worth of some values but not others which are often the negative poles of the former. “For example, there would be high agreement about the desirability of liberty, love, kindness, justice ... and on the undesirability of subjugation, enmity, cruelty, ignorance, injustice and so on (Willower, 1999, p. 131). Willower contends that some values are thus outside the realm of controversy and these he calls “basic ethical principles” which have acquired this position through use and experience. This is, however, contested and I would argue that few if any, values are outside the realm of controversy. The very values Willower presents as non-controversial are contested. Values like liberty, love, kindness and justice have very different meanings across cultures and even within them. All of them are moreover treated as if they are gender-neutral, which is far from being true.

Similarly, Árnason (1990) rejects the notion of universal values and thus sees no merit in setting values through legislation. He points out that feminists have repeatedly argued that many of the most basic values of western societies do in fact strengthen the patriarchy and disempower women. Instead, what is needed is neither new legislation nor more theories, but more, and a different form of, dialogue about ethical issues (1990, p. 102). Árnason recommends Habermas’ ‘theory of communication’ as a means to engage in social enquiry and critique.

Habermas’ communication theory seems to meet the requirements for the kind of social Critique which traditional ethical inquiry has not allowed for... . It entails a vision for social justice which can be applied to politics, law as well as issues of equality and equity

(pp. 107-108).

The place of disadvantaged groups such as women in the dominant discourse of any time in history and those who dominate it can be delicate and at worst, weak. An important dimension of this study relates to whether or not women educational leaders perceive themselves as having a voice when it comes to deciding which educational values will take precedence over others. Politicians, head teachers, educational leaders, scholars, and others whose voice is heard might be expected to support a culture which

allows for the necessary dialogue and interaction for this to transpire. Grace (1997) agrees that ethical considerations should be a prime responsibility of educational leaders but is concerned that the schooling realities may not allow the educational leaders to establish the conditions for dialogue, participation and respect for persons and their ideas.

If present schooling arrangements limit, in various ways, dialogue, participation and respect for persons, then there are serious ethical issues to be addressed in a framework which goes beyond management culture
(p. 55).

Headship in a time of social turmoil and diversity is far from being easy. Begley (2004) points out that there may be those who wish for the development of a prescriptive guide to values-added leadership, “a catalogue of correct values” which school administrators could adopt with certainty. This, he argues, is impossible because “the process of valuation in school leadership” is far too context-bound to allow for this kind of easy solution (p. 11).

Values do nevertheless acquire a dominant status in societies during particular times. Certain values will permeate public policy as well as the general discourse on everything from education to road construction. In Iceland, for instance, the nation has been divided for years on issues like whether to continue on the path of large-scale industry at the cost of the natural environment or to look for other small or large-scale profitable avenues. Currently there is also a hot debate on public schools versus private. In both instances, the values of the proponents, whether for, or against actions, are at the heart of the debate.

2.4 Values as a Guide to Administrative Practice

Many western societies are currently going through profound changes which have great impacts on family life and the upbringing of children. In turbulent times, old values may be lost or forgotten without being replaced by others or the necessary time taken to reflect on new or revised ones (Finnbogason, 2004). When, however, new values emerge or become highlighted in policy-making, popular discourse or public documents, they are often contested.

Values have been discussed and contested since the time of the great Greek founders of philosophy. The study of values has dealt with what is good or desirable and with the

kind of behaviour that one should engage in to be virtuous at least since the time of Plato, who saw a knowledge of values as “the ends which all life, private or public, should realize” (Plato, quoted in Cornford, 1974, p. 211).

In more recent times, philosophers have continued to examine values and, as mentioned earlier, the terms leadership and values are increasingly addressed simultaneously. Willower (1999) maintains that values have always played a role in educational discourse, though to a varying degree. According to Begley (1999), there has, however, been a long-lasting disagreement among researchers about the function of values in administration which:

...remains clouded by conceptual difficulties and epistemological wrangling. However, all these theoretical postures share one quality - they more readily embrace the notions of personal value, will, or intent as influences on administration (p. 117).

It is now possible to talk about different schools of thought on values and leadership. Begley has categorized recent writing and theorizing on leadership and values and has come up with three labels: theoretically, philosophically and pragmatically oriented writers (1999, p. 117). Begley (1999) positions himself with Leithwood, Willower, Roche, Strike, Campell-Evans and Sergiovanni and others who are more “pragmatically aligned towards applied administrative practices as opposed to philosophical and theoretical” (p. 118). Willower, in keeping with Begley, sees educational management as a practical science and advocates the importance of “the process of making moral choices” (1999, p.132). In separating values from critical thinking and reflective analysis, “the very processes needed to abet moral choices ... we run the risk of diminishing our possibility of making moral choices” (p. 132). This is supported by Hodgkinson (1991) who sees values, morals and ethics as central to leadership and administration. Educational leaders are constantly faced with moral questions, value conflicts and dilemmas in their organizational settings and necessarily have to make value judgments. Leaders are now increasingly encouraged to reflect upon their values, to be aware of their values and to know where they stand on important moral and professional issues and act accordingly.

The above discussion of values underscores the fact that values are far from being new in the literature dealing with the motives behind action. What has changed is the more prominent role the concepts have recently began to play in both theory and practice of educational management and leadership (Edwardsdóttir, 2004. Begley, 1999, 2004,

2005; Branson, 2006; Cheng, 2002; Coleman, 2002, 2005; Gold, Evans, Earley, Halpin, and Collarbone, 2003; Guðbjörnsdóttir, 2001; Hall, 1996; Hodgkinson, 1991; Sergiovanni, 2000, 2001, 2002; Willower, 1999). Contemporary school administrators increasingly encounter dilemmas or value conflicts where consensus can not be achieved. This calls upon the leader to go through what Begley (2005) calls a “valuation process” where she/he reflects on her/his own values and ethical dispositions as well as being sensitive to others” (p. 6). Head teachers gain their formal authority through legislation and have an obligation as civil servants to carry out and implement public educational policy. The decisions they take in their posts may depend on their professional and personal preferences, legislation or policy documents. They may also be affected by social constructs such as their and others’ race, ethnicity, class or gender, sexuality and disability. Last but not least, values, as gendered social constructs, will impact on the way they think and behave in their role. This applies to their own values, and also to the values of those in their environment. Every step of the way, head teachers are therefore under the influence of their own dispositions and those of the environment. In their everyday practice, while everything goes according to plan, objectives can be pursued vigorously and decisions made without considerable soul-searching. It is when problems and issues of controversy arise that it becomes particularly important for head teachers to ask themselves on which criteria to base their decisions or “when choices are between closely competing goods or the lesser of evils that moral valuation comes into play” (Willower, 1999, p. 132). At such moments, this may also be exactly what is required of them: that they explain their actions and decisions, with reference to legislation, traditions or ethical stance. As Begley (1999), and Hodgkinson (1978, 1991) have pointed out, values play an important role in this process and are likely to serve as both a criterion and a barometer in the everyday practice of administrators. They become of particular importance when one needs to know about intents and purposes of somebody or it is seen to be necessary to clarify an act or when difficulty is encountered attempting to establish consensus within a given population (Begley, 2003, 2004, 2005; Branson, 2005, 2006; Hodgkinson, 1991; Sergiovanni, 2000, 2001, 2002). Values of school managers will also inform their management style and help them to mediate the external context for education with the agreed purpose of the school (Gold and Evans, 1998, p. 13) and “to see that the values stated are implicit in every activity that takes place in the school” (pp. 4-5).

For leaders such as head teachers, values are thus important for various reasons. Firstly, they can provide an important platform for head teachers' decision making, in particular in difficult situations and when facing critical incidents. Secondly, they are of particular importance when they are required to inform or clarify their intents and purposes. Thirdly, head teachers who are clear about their values can access them readily and articulate them are likely to be better off than those who are not because ethics directly touch upon even the most mundane problems (Árnason, 1990, p. 83). Head teachers are, however, not islands; on the contrary. Begley (2004) has portrayed how contemporary head teachers are often caught up in the middle of contrasting and competing values of school stakeholders. The head teachers and their role are therefore constantly under pressure from the micro-environment of the school as well as the macro-environment of legislature and policy-makers. Therefore, a discussion on the macro-environment of schools and the values which underpin it follows below.

2.5 Values of the Macro-Environment of Schools

In this section, relevant literature will be used to highlight the main changes in the environment of schools and how these changes may be affecting male and female head teachers. The discussion has relevance for this study because of its focus on the contemporary political and social environment of schools at the beginning of a new century.

In recent years, schools have met with various policy changes. Parallel to policy developments and changes in the environment of schools and school systems, the publication of educational management literature has increased considerably. Public policy and also much of this literature, is currently being criticized by scholars from the disciplines of educational management and philosophy for being either uncritical or primarily problem-solving (Blackmore, 1993; Begley, 1999; Grace 1997; Gewirtz, 2002; Hatcher, 2004; Sinclair, 1999; Thrupp and Willmott, 2003). Some of this work will be examined in this section. This literature has particular importance for this study because it draws attention to the manner in which current policy-making is often introduced almost as if policies operated in a vacuum. Legislators and other policy-makers often discuss issues of educational change as if they were gender neutral. Values are, however, gendered, social constructs and these changes, and the values which underpin them, may affect people differently depending on their gender, but also on their age, social status, ethnicity and other defining attributes. In reality, therefore, they

may have serious implication for all of those who do not align themselves with the current stereotypically masculine modes of management.

The contributors to this debate have a wide range of viewpoints. Thrupp and Wilmott (2004) have examined many popular texts on management and leadership and placed the authors on a continuum from the uncritical to the critical, which they label “textual dissenters” (p. 61). Grace (1997) has described these [critical] perspectives on school leadership as “a body of writings and discourse which has arisen in opposition to these [managerial] tendencies” (p. 50). Earlier, Greenfield (1991) encouraged educational leaders to take the time to reflect on their role and avoid being caught up in the drive for effectiveness: “the questions of purpose and morality, the questions arising from the necessary imposition of one person’s will upon another. ... these matters are set aside in a search for a pallid consensus and an illusory effectiveness” (Greenfield, 1991, p. 6).

Others, such as Begley, (2003) encourage leaders to be not only hopeful and visionary but to respond “creatively to social circumstances” (p. 1) and Glasl (1997) warns against being guided by moral conventions or stereotypes but rather urges leaders to have the courage to go along an individual path of searching and questioning (p. 88). These examples indicate that even if scholars approach the concept “critical” in various ways, their perspective is similar. All of them emphasize the importance of basing actions on informed choices, sound judgements and critical thinking, which Skúlason (1987) defines in the following manner:

A thought is critical if it does not accept any opinion or assertion unless it has first been either examined or sufficient rationale found for its existence. This is the foundation and the ballast of all authentic, scholarly work
(p. 70).

On the one hand, these scholars criticize policy-making agents for advocating market values and managerialism and, on the other, they accuse other scholars of not taking a stance and either subtly or openly adopting values of the market and incorporating them into their theorizing. This literature is seen as being insensitive to social inequalities, and disregarding the role schools play in reproducing them as well as the role of head teachers as value carriers. These writers may be seen as critical education management theorists who reject the neo-liberal education and criticize the dominant education management theory. They also share the belief that school leaders, aided by critical management academics, are potentially agents of resistance to managerialism (Hatcher, 2004, p. 5).

Resisting market forces in an era of managerialism is, however, far from being easy or simple. In the light of history, Hatcher (2004) finds it unlikely that head teachers will act as agents of resistance. If the intention is to reconstitute the nature of educational leadership “then it faces not only the accumulated weight of a historical, patriarchal tradition but also the potency of new forms of masculine, corporate management” (Grace, 1997, p. 61). Part of this tradition consists of language which, in Western societies, reveals patterns of patriarchy and male authority which involves the domination of social power (Marshall, 1990, p. 47). Here, language, and in particular two concepts, managerialism and masculinity, have important implications.

Globally, the use of managerialism has now been consolidated and this has led to continued acceptance of quasi-market mechanisms and an increased emphasis on performance management (Thrupp and Willmott, 2003, p. 13). Within a managerialist environment and discourse, words like femininity and masculinity become highlighted because language is a cultural system which carries socially acceptable values (Marshall, 1990). Marshall has captured this difference in the following quotation:

The concepts are not equal because they are not assigned equal social worth. Masculinity and femininity make up a social structure in which femininity is consistently played down. Its characteristics - such as emotionality, domesticity and nurturing – are perpetually devalued compared with masculine traits of rationality, public action and independence. As a result the female sex role itself is revealed a devalued social role

(p. 30).

This view is endorsed by Blackmore (1999) who notes that it is white, middle-class, heterosexual males who continue to have cultural and financial power which they derive from contemporary educational discourses that circulate about “good’ leadership-discourses that associate masculinity with economic rationality, being strong, making ‘hard’ decisions, the ‘hard’ knowledge areas of science and technology and entrepreneurship” (p. 9).

Similarly, Gewirtz (2002), in her analysis of the changing practices and orientation of school headship, has expressed concern that the role of head teachers, their sense of identity and purpose are being reworked and redefined. In her opinion, “the market revolution is not just a change of structure and incentives. It is a transformational process that brings into play a new set of values and a new moral environment” (p. 47). Gewirtz (2002) sees this new moral environment as being reflected in ‘new managerialism’, an organisational mode of co-ordination, leadership style and values

associated with the post-welfarism (p. 29). New managerialism emphasizes the development of techniques, procedures and organisational practices that are intended to facilitate speed of decisions, coordination, the setting and reviewing of objectives, good financial controls and information, cost improvements, responsiveness and consumer loyalty (Gewirtz, 2002, p. 29, quoting Considine, 1988). ‘New managerialism’ forms one of two clusters of characteristics of two ideal type discourses of school headship in a model presented by Gewirtz. The other is ‘welfarism’, which, according to Gewirtz, “represents the organisational mode of co-ordination, leadership style and values associated with the welfarist settlement” (p. 29). More specifically, welfarism emphasizes intrinsic qualities of the “product-process” which, in an educational setting, refers to teaching and learning. The key concepts of these two discourses of school headship can be found in Figure 2.3.

Welfarism Public-service Ethos	New Managerialism Customer-oriented Ethos
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions driven by commitment to “professional standards” and values, e.g. equity, care, and social justice. • Emphasis on collective relations with employees through trade unions. • Consultative • Substantive rationality • Managers socialised within the field and values of specific welfare sector, e.g. education, health, social work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions instrumentalist and driven by efficiency, cost-effectiveness, search for competitive edge. • Emphasis on individual relations through marginalisation of trade unions and new management techniques, e.g. TQM, HRM. • Authoritarian/macho • Competition • Managers generally socialized, i.e. within the field and values of “management”.

Figure 2.3 Main Characteristics of Welfarism and New Managerialism

This model will be referred to frequently in the analysis because it can shed light on whether head teachers’ actions are public service oriented or customer-oriented. Head teachers’ orientations can indicate to what extent they are in agreement with the current restructuring of education. The standpoint they take is likely to have an impact on how well they fare in their everyday practice as head teachers.

Critical leadership studies focus on mainstream educational leadership, but to a varied degree they also feature in the work of feminist scholars (Blackmore, 1999; Hall, 1996,

Strachan, 1999). The main targets of critique are similar: patriarchal cultures; organizational structures with strong hierarchies based on masculine values in a competitive, non-caring environment or structural sites of oppression such as race, class and gender; or the concepts used to assign roles to men and women, masculinity and femininity (Blackmore, 1999; Hall, 1996; Sergiovanni, 2001; Strachan, 1999; Thrupp and Willmott, 2003). Hall (1996) observes that “from the perspective of critical leadership theory, feminist praxis challenges the assumptions of a market-led education system and the patriarchal ‘masculine’ attitudes to power that underpin it” (p. 192).

Chapter three, *Women, Values and Educational Leadership* focuses more closely on the gendered implications of the current political and social environment of women and men head teachers.

2.6 Summary

The focus of this chapter was on values, their nature and origin. Particular attention was paid to the role of values in informed choices and decision making of men and women leaders in the context of current educational restructuring. Therefore, following in Section 2.5 was an examination of the macro-environments of schools, mainly as reflected in scholarly work on educational administration since the 1990s. This discussion revealed that the environment of schools has changed considerably in the past 10-15 years from emphasizing predominantly social (or welfarist) concerns to concerns of the market, where competition and performance are the key concerns. Simultaneously the role of Icelandic head teachers has changed from being a predominantly leadership role, with an emphasis on pedagogical issues, to being predominantly that of an administrator. It is into this educational context that new leaders, and a growing number of women leaders, are stepping.

Chapter 3

Women, Values and Educational Leadership

3.0 Introduction

An account was given in Chapter 2 of the context and climate which women head teachers are entering and in which many of them already work. Issues relating to social change, and how it may be affecting women and men head teachers, are particularly important in contemporary western societies which see themselves as advocates of social justice, equality and equity but may, in some instances, be advocating and acting out a policy which works counter to that ideology. This context, the contemporary political and social environment of women and men head teachers, has a prominence in this study. The pressures brought about by this managerial, or market-driven, environment may discourage more women than men from aspiring to headship, which would not only increase the imbalance of social power in society but also deprive society of the contribution of women educational leaders (Campbell et al. 2003; Coleman, 2005; Gold et al.; 2003; Coleman 2002; Hall, 1996; Strachan 1999). This would also be a serious setback, as women have just begun to gain their rightful place in the theory and practice of educational leadership, a place which is therefore neither long-established, strong nor stable, as the following discussion will show.

In this chapter, the focus will be on women leaders and their values. To provide a platform for the discussion, the chapter opens with a short review of the development of theories of leadership, mainly in the absence of women, followed by an examination of research on women as educational leaders in the past 25 years. The chapter also involves a discussion of the construction of gender identity and leaders' value formation and their implications for leadership behaviour.

3.1 Women's Place in the Development of Theories of Educational Leadership

Educational leadership and management have developed as a field of study and practice over approximately a century. Historically, it has been constituted as an interdisciplinary and eclectic body of knowledge and field of practice (Blackmore, 1999, p. 43). By the 1960s, the view that educational management as a field was

grounded on a rational model, stressing the use of social-science theories, was the accepted basis for studying and teaching educational administration; this view had developed over approximately 10 years, prior to 1960 (Burlingame and Harris, 1998, p. 24).

In the early 1980s, Greenfield shook the academic community in the USA and elsewhere with a paper where he criticized most existing studies for being merely technical and mechanistic and argued that questions of administration were philosophical rather than scientific. More recently, Greenfield's perspective has been endorsed by other writers, such as Grace (1997), Richmon (2003) and Thrupp and Willmott (2003). Burlingame and Harris (1998, p. 24), interpreting Greenfield's motives, suspect that when he became aware of the moral dimensions of leadership, he became increasingly concerned by the lack of concern, or even hostility, towards disadvantaged groups such as women (p. 24). Parallel to this development was the rise of second-wave feminism in the western hemisphere, the emerging gender programmes and the first tentative claims to develop educational administration into an inclusive discipline (Einarsdóttir, 2004; Leonard, 2001). Popular ideologies and administrative theories of the twentieth century were nevertheless gender-blind, a condition that remained unchanged until the late 1970s. In the historical development of the field of educational administration, women researchers and theorists have therefore been relatively few in number, or at least rarely accounted for (Blackmore, 1999; Shakeshaft, 1987b, 1999; Strachan, 1993). "Women's writing in the area of educational leadership has ... been largely ignored. Those who are considered to be experts in the field are predominately men" (Strachan, 1993, p. 73).

This was especially true in the first half of the twentieth century, when men dominated both theory and practice of educational administration to the degree that even those women whose work was published remained in the shadows. Among these women was Mary Parker Follett, who wrote a series of highly acclaimed papers dealing with the human side of administration (Hoy and Miskel 1978, p. 7; 1987, p. 11; 2001, p. 14). "Despite Follet's work, the development of the human relations approach is usually traced to studies done in the Hawthorne plant of the Western Electric Company in Chicago" (Hoy and Miskel, 2001, p. 14).

Needless to say, the names that are repeatedly associated with the human relations movement are males and do not include Follet's name. Hoy and Miskel's textbooks are

the exceptions that prove the rule. However, already 30 years ago, Hodgkinson (1978) pointed out that it was Mary Parker Follett who established the philosophical base for the human relation movement and that it was “remarkably well received” (p. 10).

The same applies to the concept *gender* which, until recently, has played either a minor role or none at all in the literature. Last but not least, perspectives such as *feminism* have been largely ignored. Gossetti and Rush (1995) capture the essence of this prevailing condition:

... texts, conversations, writings and understanding of leadership come from an embedded privileged perspective which largely ignores issues of status, gender and race and insidiously perpetuates a view of leadership that discourages diversity and equity
(p. 12).

Early conceptualizations of leadership were shaped by the dominant, normative view of organizations of rational systems. Ogawa has pointed out that “the earliest modern conceptions of organizations depict them as rational systems” where rationality is meant in the narrow sense of technical rationality (2005, p. 94). Blackmore (1999, p. 43), who endorses this view, has argued that the power of the twentieth century administrative discourse of rationality and science did not allow for alternative discourses of leadership such as those of feminists. If the situation of women was bleak, it was no brighter for other socially disadvantaged groups because not only women but also people of colour were almost completely absent from the study of leadership until the late 1970s (McGee Banks, 2000). In the early sixties and seventies, new-wave feminism gradually became influential in universities and the scholarly work of feminists (Einarsdóttir, 2004, p. 218). Towards the last quarter of the twentieth century, the situation had begun to change noticeably due to research and writings of women and a few men who had acknowledged that not only were women suffering because of this under-representation of women in the public sphere but society as a whole.

Since the 1980s, feminist research on educational administration has been gradually growing, based on pioneer work of women such as Shakeshaft (1987b, 1999), who mapped the stages of research on women and gender in USA and elsewhere and encouraged further research. In the late 1990s, Shakeshaft came to the conclusion that the knowledge base of educational administration was inadequate as a conceptual foundation for understanding and informing practice in organisations (Shakeshaft, 1987a).

I will argue that most theory and practice in organizational and administrative thoughts is based upon studies and behaviours of white males and that it is adequate for understanding human behaviour only to the extent that women and people of colour interpret the world and respond like white males

(p. 139).

Others, such as Reynolds (1995), have continued in a similar vein, systematically collecting historical data from the period of “womanless administration and leadership” (p. 2) in order to reconstruct the discourse of administration and leadership. In England, Valerie Hall (2002), was a pioneer in studying women educational leaders. As she stated herself, “My engagement with women’s issues began in the early 1960s and has taken many twists and turns” (p. 14). These earlier studies were an incentive for further investigation into the issue of gender in educational administration and have led to an emerging, small-scale, inclusion, although not integration of gender (Owens, 1991; Hoy and Miskel, 1978, 1987, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2001) in the mainstream literature and textbooks within the discipline (Lárusdóttir, 2003). Popular textbooks on educational administration in Iceland include Owens’s edition of *Organizational behaviour in education* (1991), which included a chapter on “Women’s issues in organizational behaviour” and Sergiovanni’s book, *The Principalsip* (2001), which covers the issue in half a page (p. 295). In neither instance is the gender dimension integrated into the text, but treated as a separate issue. Hoy and Miskel attempt such integration in their discussion of two issues: communication style (2001, pp. 369-370) and bureaucracy (pp. 90-91). This amounts to three out of 500 pages in Hoy and Miskel’s book, which seems moderate considering the available literature on leadership and gender.

It can therefore be maintained that even if educational administration as a discipline has developed throughout a period of almost a century, it was not until the last third of the twentieth century that the categories *gender* and *woman* entered the discourse of educational management. In spite of this development, there are few textbooks on educational administration which weave the research and experience of women leaders into the pattern of the theoretical content. Books written by women are, however, still rare, prompting Sinclair (1999) to ask, “Why, despite the vast literature on leadership, has the study of women and leadership received so little attention?” (p. 15). As late as the year 2002, Hall, reflecting on the impact of her own and others’ research on educational leadership and gender, states: “I have been particularly struck by the failure of that theorizing to have any real impact on construction of leading and managing in education” (p. 13).

3.2 Research on Women as Educational Leaders

In the last quarter of the twentieth century there was to be an increase in research on both men and women educational leaders. Some of this research focused on both men and women, some on women only. The leadership research on women educational leaders which will be reviewed here falls into three main categories. First, there is research which has focused on comparing the leadership behaviour of women and men. Around the turn of the century, after approximately 20 years of this type of research, there was considerable evidence to show that the leadership behaviour of women has common elements which in many ways is markedly different from men's, and this seemed to hold regardless of national cultures and geographical locations (Coleman, 1996, 2000; Dorn, O'Rourke, Papalewis, 2001; Hall, 1996; Reynolds and Young, 1995; Shakeshaft, 1987b; Strachan, 1999). Second, from the early 1990s and parallel to these 'difference studies', other studies have focused less on differences between men and women leaders and more on women leaders in their own right and the common features of women leaders. Also, these studies pointed to many common elements in women's way of leading, indicating that women leaders were quite often seen as being successful, revealing grounds for acknowledging that women leaders were frequently successful. As a result, it was acknowledged that rather than concentrating on qualities and behaviours that differentiate men and women leaders, it might be more productive to concentrate on those leadership qualities that women share (Adler, Laney and Packer, 1993; Blackmore, 1999; Guðbjörnsdóttir, 1997; Hall, 1996; Shakeshaft, 1999). In Hall's words, (1996) "Focusing on gender and school leadership, and giving a voice to women's perspectives, provides a model for future studies of both men and women as educational leaders" (p. 204). Finally, there are contemporary studies on the values that shape leadership behaviour of men and women. These studies indicate that the articulated values of women and men leaders are similar.

The following discussion is therefore intended to shed light on some of the research on educational leadership by women in the past 20 years. Included are studies from the three categories presented above.

3.2.1 'Difference Studies' – Women Leaders Compared to Men Leaders

Shakeshaft's groundbreaking book *Women in Educational Administration* was first published in 1987. Based on her own and other's research on female leaders' behaviour

in schools, she concluded that to women leaders, relationships with others were central to their actions, teaching and learning were the major foci of their work, their style was more democratic and participatory, they were informal, more caring than men and the line they draw between the private and the professional is blurred (1987b, pp. 197-198).

Research in England, Iceland, Australia and New Zealand (Adler et al., 1993; Blackmore, 1999; Guðbjörnsdóttir, 1997; Ozga 1993; Strachan, 1993, 1999) showed similar results. Ozga (1993) refers to research which indicates that women leaders tend to lead in a more democratic way than men do, are more flexible, more intuitive than men, better at conflict solving and often more effective than men. Blackmore (1999, p. 15) draws attention to the fact that in research as well as elsewhere, women leaders have been typified as being more student centered, democratic, collegial, caring and curriculum-centered and also as good change agents. Adler et al., (1993) found that women leaders often have a closer and more informal relationship with their superiors than men; they emphasize co-operation rather than competition and focus more than men do on teaching and learning. Women's emphasis on teaching and learning is supported by both the earliest and most recent studies (Hansen, Lárusdóttir and Ólafsson, 2004; Shakeshaft, 1987b).

In Iceland, Guðbjörnsdóttir (1997) surveyed all head teachers and found many differences between the way Icelandic women and men head teachers led, although these differences seemed to be less than research elsewhere had indicated (Adler et al.; Ozga, 1993; Shakeshaft, 1987). Guðbjörnsdóttir concludes that Icelandic women within the educational sector show many characteristics of affiliative leadership styles, emphasizing good working atmosphere, distribution of power and decision-making and empowering of others (p. 185).

Collard (2003, pp. 181-182) asked a stratified sample of men and women principals about their perceptions and beliefs about student abilities, curriculum goals and pedagogy, working with teachers and the roles of parent and community members, and found that:

Claims that women wish to work in more relational ways than men were confirmed. They were much more committed to collegiality and teamwork. They were more willing to foster a consultative climate within the school and allow staff to participate in decision making. They were more receptive to advice and demonstrated greater tolerance for debate about goals and policies

(p. 189).

These findings thus suggest that there were significant differences in the perceptions and beliefs of male and female principals.

3.2.2 ‘Sameness Studies’– Women’s Ways of Leading

After years of comparing women leadership behaviour to that of men, researchers began to examine women leaders in their own right. Dorn, O’Rourke and Papalewis (2001) asked nine female educational leaders what they saw as most important for leadership in education. The qualities they listed were caring, nurturing, inclusiveness, intuition and openness. These findings are almost identical to those of Coleman, who interviewed five female head teachers in England and Wales (1996) and found that all of them “identified themselves as being caring, creative, intuitive and aware of individual differences” (p. 166). In a survey of all head teachers in England and Wales, Coleman (2000) found that the majority (85%) of the female head teachers described their management style as being collaborative, and people-oriented (p. 26). Strachan (1999, p. 312) used a case-study approach to interview 25 female secondary school principals in New Zealand and found that they focused on sharing of power, the ethic of care and social justice. Common to all these findings is an emphasis on collaboration, power sharing, caring, teaching and learning and a flat power hierarchy. Blackmore (1999) notes that there is now considerable research on women in leadership “which focuses upon the sameness amongst women in their way of seeing, knowing, organizing and leading” (p. 56).

The beliefs of principals are also shaped by the institutional contexts in which they work, such as size of school, which along with gender, contribute to organizational culture (Collard, 2003). The question of context is taken up by Reay and Ball (2000) when addressing the alleged differences between men’s and women’s ways of leading. They suggest that this is more a matter of degree, such as women being slightly less directive than their male counterparts, but conclude that “there are clearly enormous difficulties in translating what are traditionally perceived to be women’s ways of working into senior management contexts” (Reay and Ball, 2000, p. 151).

Hall (1996) examined the leadership behaviour of six women head teachers in the UK. While acknowledging that “The problems in making comparisons are in knowing whether the differences are attributable to gender the context or personalities” (p. 201), she came to the following conclusion:

The women heads, in contrast, represented one recurring interpretation, in spite of differences in personality and context. In other words, the similarities between them were greater than the differences. I have suggested that what they held in common were the value systems underpinning their management and leadership behaviours, combined with the skills and competences they have developed throughout their careers

(p. 291).

Hall is one of the first feminist researchers to recognize the importance and implications of values in leadership (1996). Since then, few have followed in her footsteps.

3.2.3 Women Educational Leaders and Values

As mentioned above, earlier research often focused on the differences between the leadership styles of women and men and the 'sameness' of women leaders. However, a few recent studies have focused more on the underlying values of female and male head teachers. In Hall's qualitative study of six successful women heads, she set out to explore "the values that inform the heads' leadership styles" (1996, pp. 4-5). On the importance of values Hall writes: "In education ... discussing leadership without discussing leaders' values is like music without sound, dogma without belief" (p. 4). Hall found that these women did not feel ready for headship until they had clarified their personal values and beliefs as a basis for becoming educational leaders. In Iceland, Edvardsdóttir (2000) surveyed all Icelandic head teachers and had "expected a difference between feminine and masculine values" (p. 3) but found their articulated values to be very similar, reflecting in the main values and styles which are typically assigned to women such as care, co-operation and informal relationship with staff and students (pp. 78-79).

In Coleman's (2002) survey of female and male secondary head teachers in England and Wales, she examined the way in which gender affects their leadership style. She found that "all the head teachers were clear about the values they held" (p. 134) and that both men and women favoured a style that valued people and collaborative approaches, which is the style most often labelled "feminine" (p.161). In a more recent study (2005), Coleman found that among the favoured adjectives chosen by both men and women head teachers to express their management style were open, consultative, democratic and collaborative. A common finding in the above research is the emphasis on collaborative styles and democratic relations allowing for the opportunity for all.

Coleman (2002) raises an important issue relating to the fact that even when men and women head teachers describe their management style and values in a similar manner, it has to be remembered that being a female head teacher is a very different experience from being a male head teacher because of the different status assigned by society to men and women managers (p. 155). This has recently been endorsed in a survey among men and women secondary heads in England which highlighted the fact that the women sometimes felt that they had to justify their existence as women leaders whereas male heads did not question their situation as leaders (Coleman, 2005).

The research by Hall (1996) and Coleman (2002, 2005), and also the Icelandic study by Edvardsdóttir (2000) indicate that the articulated values of women and men leaders are similar and the same goes for their perceived leadership behaviour. The implications of this raise many questions which will need to be addressed in future research. One of the questions relates to gender socialization and the construction of gender both as children and as adults within organizations. This study includes head teachers who have been through similar experiences in the changing context of headship. It is conceivable that a new generation of young men and women with similar views on leadership and the role of head teachers are stepping into the arena. If so, only time can tell who or what has changed whom, how and in what ways. This issue is further explored in section 3.6.

3.2.4 The Duality of Socially and Biologically Based Gender Differences

It has been established that there was an increase in research on both men and women educational leaders in the last quarter of the twentieth century. As discussed above, this research falls into three categories; research in which the leadership behaviour of women and men is compared, research on women leaders in their own right and contemporary studies on the values that shape leadership behaviour of men and women.

When this study is examined in the light of the above three categories of women leaders it falls into the last category, that of women educational leaders and values. This study does, however, specifically address the impact of gendered discourses on the role and career paths of Icelandic head teachers.

Earlier research clearly established that there are differences between the way men and women leaders operate. Gender differences exist but gender influences on behaviour are, I believe, socially, rather than biologically based. I therefore assume that there will

be commonalities in women's and men's experience of leading schools both because of the social construction of gender and because the nature of organisations is gendered (Hall, 1996).

For too long, these differences have been seen as representing a difference by nature, an innate difference reflecting an essentialist view followed by generalizations about women leaders who are then seen as a homogeneous group of persons who are naturally "nurturing, affiliative and good at interpersonal relations" (Reay and Ball, 2000, p. 145). It is nevertheless true that women and men leaders have been found to behave differently. This should not come as a surprise, given the fact that they have met very different expectations based on cultural stereotypes about gender behaviour. Ideas about what constitutes femininity and masculinity are socially constructed and the identities of women and men are gendered, shaped by the dominant discourse and their own experience in this gendered 'reality'. Men are therefore not naturally bureaucratic nor are women, by nature, collaborative. Rather, they learn, culture and society teaches them to behave in certain ways until in the end it has bestowed upon them "the taken for granted quality of naturalness" (Jenkins, 1993, p. 107).

Like the footprint we unquestionably pass every day, the underlying values and beliefs of our societal framework become taken-for-granted and uncritically accepted. An example of assumptions and values that we traditionally accept as natural and normative is the universal application of the male experience to our understanding of the world

(Gossetti and Rush, 1995, p. 13).

It is thus learned behaviours driven by various social and national constructs that shape what is later labelled either feminine or masculine leadership styles which may lead to certain role expectations (Stelter, 2004, p. 5). Women and men are born into and have to work within the existing social definitions and are therefore not free to define themselves and their identity.

This does not, however, mean that people are powerless agents without agency. They are actors in shaping their identity but they do so within particular historical and social contexts (Skaptadóttir, 2003). In order to understand how girls are reproduced in a society which is dominated by male hegemony, it is therefore important to examine women's lives and how they are shaped and limited by dominant discourse and social structure.

But how can this be accomplished? How can we expose the underlying values and beliefs of our societal framework which we often take for granted and accept uncritically? (Gossetti and Rush, 1995, p. 13). What models or theoretical orientations will prove helpful in this kind of work? Eisenstein (1993) describes the inadequacy of the theoretical frameworks of mainstream theories in explaining what she experienced on a daily basis, “that the gender experience of being female in that structure had enormous and powerful significance” (p. 3). Eisenstein’s point remains equally important now as it was almost 15 years ago. Apparently there are no models or theoretical orientations which capture what she refers to as “enormous and powerful significance” of being a female in contemporary educational institutions. As mentioned before, in this study I attempt to develop one such model to serve the purpose of this particular study.

The literature on gender socialization is vast and has played an important role in feminist thinking. Francis (2000) observes that the main achievement of such work has been to expose the reproductive role of education in maintaining symbolic representation of male rationality and female sub-service. It also sheds light on the gender hierarchies of educational management and the masculine expectations by which they are framed (p. 14). Critically examining the origin and reproduction of values which dominate in society at any given time and the values that women and men educational leaders hold might help to put an end to a history which constantly repeats itself in a process of cultural and social reproduction. In the next section, therefore, the formation of gender identities and value adoption will be discussed.

3.3 Gender Identities and Leaders’ Value Formation

A great deal has been written about the notion that selves are multiple, fluid, ever changing, and constantly on the move. This is particularly prominent in the writings of postmodernists, mainly Foucault (1977). In essence, these perceptions advocate the acceptance of multiplicity rather than consistency in each person’s personal identity. These perspectives emphasize the ways in which people in a post-modern world need to adopt multiple roles and enact multiple performances in order to negotiate meanings, status, security, and position in their everyday life (McAdams, 1997).

Many interrelated elements contribute to the formation of one’s identity. Among the elements that shape identity are age, social class, ethnicity, sexuality, physical

appearance and gender. The known aspects of the self, such as behaviour, attitudes and possibly motives and values may also partly contribute to identity formation (Branson, 2006). All these elements compete for having an impact on the observable behaviour of individuals. Any individual is also likely to form many identities which may change over time. People have identity as parents, friends, husbands and wives and as leaders. The head teachers in this research will thus have developed their own distinct leadership identity.

Most children develop a clear sense of gender identity, of being either 'a boy' or 'a girl' at a young age. These ideas are further confirmed when children begin their early childhood education. Anggård (2005) found that stories of pre-school children reflect the ideas of their teachers who expect boys and girls to choose different themes for their storybooks. Their stories were also influenced by the features (discourse) of gender-stereotypes prevailing in both the traditional media and popular cultural products. Anggård explored stories where pre-school children reused narratives they had picked up from different media. Gabriella, age 5, wrote a story about a prince and a princess and the prince asked "what are we going to eat"? The princess answered: "We're having soup". The quotation confirms that children are quite young when they suspect that the human race is divided into two kinds of people, men and women, and negotiate and construct the roles that are seen to be appropriate for each category. Anggård concludes:

As children learn early on that the world is divided into men and women, and that they have to choose the 'right' gender to be accepted, it is not surprising that they use the most characteristic traits when they position themselves

(Anggård, 2005, p. 551).

After gender identity is formed, then gender stability, the realization that girls grow up to be women and boys will become men, develops. It is during this period of gender stability development that many children develop stereotypic behaviours appropriate to their gender identity. Cultural stereotypes and norms of what makes a girl 'girly' and what makes a boy "macho" will help to sustain these behaviours.

These findings raise important questions about the gendered experiences children and young people have as influenced by the different cultural ideas and messages they receive. Boys and girls are often encouraged and praised for quite different behaviour. Many girls emphasize and are praised for stereotypically feminine characteristics, such as being conscientious, responsible, obedient and helpful, while boys are more often allowed to break the rules of conversations, to talk loudly and dominate and to cut in

and speak without raising their hands (Magnúsdóttir, 2005, p. 163). Court (1994, p. 5) has pointed out how cultural ideas developed within Western societies about appropriate ways to “be” feminine or masculine are associated with beliefs about the kind of work men and women are most suited to. In her view these beliefs have been particularly significant in the context of education where specific experiences are found to have shaped the way children see themselves as adults, such as when they take on a leadership position, such as headship. These various experiences are likely to impact, not only on the formation of gender identity but on their leadership identity as well.

An example of such gender-specific cultural messages is to be found in recent research findings from Spain. Rodríguez, M. del C., Pena, J. V. and Fernández, C. M. (2006) examined nursery school teachers’ perspectives to check if the discourse which shows boys and girls as opposites, relational and different from each other is still maintained by the teachers (p. 184). They found that children’s behaviour was not necessarily restricted by teachers who sometimes allowed the children to behave in a way that was seen beyond the limits established for each gender. “However, boys and girls are almost never encouraged to behave against social stereotypes” (p. 192).

Further research (Magnúsdóttir, 2005. p. 162) has shown that young male students position themselves within various masculine discourses and for this reason generalizations should not be made. This research shows that boys’ positions in the power hierarchy of their peer group are predominantly determined on the basis of their athletic prestige, their popularity with the opposite sex, and their courage. Also in Iceland, a mixed group of 50 teenagers chose male leaders for all the six groups that represented mock political parties running for the position of city major (Magnúsdóttir, 2003). When the young women were asked why they weren’t leading (running) they explained that they did not think they were competent enough or were afraid that such a step would have a negative impact on their image. Magnúsdóttir concludes:

Such perceptions can only be formed through the cultural messages they receive. From them they have drawn information about the masculine criteria in which the image of leadership seems to be enshrined
(p. 164).

Similarly, Reynolds (1999), tells about how she has persistently struggled with encouraging her graduate female students to go for promotion and “I have been troubled by numerous tales of rejection and injury when they were not selected” (p. 111).

Cultural messages have a powerful impact on children and young people and also throughout adulthood. If boys and girls continue to be encouraged and praised on the basis of stereotypical feminine and masculine behaviour (words, actions), this is likely to reproduce and sustain already long established gender inequalities.

3.4 Gender Identity and Schooling

The discussion about gender-based identity formation suggests that schools may be powerful sites for reproducing gender inequalities in students' identity formation processes. In school, children form their personal identity through interactions with their peers and with adults (Rodriguez et al., 2006, p. 183). The younger the child, the more important it is to be alert to the ways the school's practices can work on and shape young person's identities. Jóhannesson (2004) points out that many boys do not want to be seen as conscientious students. This means that boys choose to under-achieve, regardless of the competence or gender of their teacher. Hence, he warns against attracting male teachers to the teaching profession on the basis of the alleged underperformance of boys or their misbehaviour. Rather, he says, it is important that all teachers, men and women, be responsible for all aspects of teaching, the cognitive as well as the caring and the disciplinarian (p. 154).

While such discourses can reflect overt stereotypical ideas on feminities and masculinities, they can also be, or appear to be either gender-neutral or gender-blind. For example, many people see the current dominant educational discourse as being predominantly masculine (see Chapter 2). While there are various forms of masculine and feminine identities, some masculinities are dominant while others are subordinated or marginalized (Connell, 2000). Mac an Ghail, (1994) sees the current masculine form as being characterized by heterosexuality, power, authority, aggression and technical competence (p. 12). His words emphasise the view that the values, which this gender identity reflects, are not just masculine but of a particular kind of masculinity which has become hegemonic over other types of both masculine and feminine identities. Connell's words (2000) also highlight the importance of being alert to possible gender implications of both educational discourse and practice rather than assume that they are gender free or gender neutral.

In a similar manner, it is necessary to be critical of discourses which reflect stereotypical views on men. Rather, it may be wise to remember that there was a time

when all adult males were boys and that “boys are not naturally ‘tough’ and ‘hard’ but have to work hard at constructing themselves as this...” (Pattman, Frosh, and Phoenix, 2005). Pattman examined the ways in which 14-year-old boys in London were performing and experiencing boyhood. He found that the boys who were loud, funny and misogynistic in some of the group interviews were like different people when interviewed individually, where they were “much quieter and more serious and spoke about close relations” (p. 558). Pattman et al. conclude that “contemporary young masculinities in London may be lived and experienced in quite contradictory ways” (p. 560).

Our view is that gender is constructed relationally and is highly fluid, and that working with boys must not encourage them to distance themselves from versions of femininity and creating hierarchies of toughness ...

(p. 561).

This is important because there may not be many men who “actually meet the normative standards” [of masculinity] (Connell, 1995, p. 79). Narrow conceptions of acceptable masculinities are therefore not recommended since they may disadvantage women and also many men (Sinclair, 1999).

3.5 Gender Identity and Educational Leadership

This discussion about the influence of society and culture on the development of gender identity has important implications in regard to the role of head teachers. Head teachers play an important role as critical reviewers and interpreters of cultural products such as policy documents (Blackmore, 1999; Finnbogason, 2003). It should therefore be helpful for head teachers to be familiar with their own values and those of their immediate surroundings, as well as those of the wider community. This calls for an awareness of the values in the societal culture (the macro-environment) as well as the school culture (the micro-environment). Because of their role as interpreters of public policy, they need to be able to critically analyse policy documents and understand the values which underpin dominant educational discourses. Last but not least, leaders such as head teachers need to understand the gendered nature of educational discourse and its impact on the values which underpin it. Their role might be shaped through the discourse and the values it reflects. In this way, head teachers may become more alert to the ways in which schools can reproduce and sustain gender inequalities and help head teachers to look for ways to prevent this. Head teachers who are armed with such analytical tools

are more likely than others to reflect upon the appropriateness of their values and those of others. They could also be expected to step in and help teachers to prevent sustaining gender inequality through their teaching practices.

This discourse on gender identity implies that the various life experiences of each head teacher are likely to impact on the formation of his or her own gender identity and how he or she consequently enacts his or her leadership. Gender identity is an integral part of leadership behaviour and leadership is gendered. It takes on various forms of gendered identity depending on the context (Whitehead, 1999, p. 107). This means that the dominant conceptions of gender identities may have serious implications for educational leadership as they are likely to have an impact on the head teachers' role not only through policy-making and theory development but also in the everyday preferred leadership actions of head teachers. This means that the crucial interplay between gender identity and leadership behaviour needs to be acknowledged by academics and practitioners alike. Blackmore (1993), for instance, has pointed out that "administration has become identified with particular 'masculinist' cultures which are hegemonic in particular administrative contexts" (p. 29). However, the hegemony of masculine values over feminine in educational administration is not new. As mentioned before, educational administration as an academic field is a little over a hundred years old and for most of this time women have been largely absent from the field. Because the values that have come to dominate the field are largely masculine, claims to knowledge have predominantly been made on the basis of research done by men on men (Blackmore, 1999; Shakeshaft, 1987, 1999; Strachan, 1993). As mentioned before, for over two decades, feminist academics have been actively engaged in examining gender and leadership. Other academics have been examining values and leadership. Unfortunately, each of these research endeavours has for the most part been conducted within two separate fields without a joint effort of representatives from these two parties. Values, gender, and conceptions of leadership are interrelated social constructs. Values and gender constantly interact and impact on one another and they should not be separated from leadership.

This implies that any examination of gender identity as it relates to leadership behaviour must examine the role played by personal values. If leaders' gender identity influences their choice of values, which in turn, influences their choice of leadership behaviours, then, by implication, it would suggest that there is a causal link between a head teacher's personal gender identity and his or her style of leadership.

Personal values are at the heart of this causal link. By understanding how personal values influence leadership behaviour and how personal values are influenced by gender-identity formation, it becomes possible to see the crucial relationship between leadership actions and gender identity.

What much of this research has established (see Chapter 2), is the understanding that personal knowledge about one's own values, and how they may impact on leaders' attitudes and actions is seen as essential for successful leaders (Begley, 2004, 2005; Branson, 2005, 2006, Rebore, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2001; Willower, 1999). However, knowledge alone may not be enough in order to ensure that these values play an active role in guiding administrative action. Without knowledge about how their values are formed, head teachers may be unable to apply the appropriate personal values to their principal behaviour (Branson, 2006).

...by not considering how personal values are formed, and the inner antecedents of personal values within the Self, any self-knowledge of one's personal values will remain notional knowledge
(p. 5).

According to Branson, personal values are formed during key life experiences which can occur at any time throughout the life of a person. They are created from interpretations of the experience, rather than being based on factual evidence. The response to this life experience is then reproduced whenever the persons perceive another life experience as having the same characteristics. In this way an image, formed during a unique life experience, continues to be at the centre of the principal's response to new life experiences (Branson, 2006, p. 7). However, Branson's work does not reveal whether the life experiences of the head teachers in his research reflected gender-related differences. The reader therefore does not know whether the values they adopted were based on ideas or messages which were primarily gendered in nature. Could the articulated stories indicate stereotypically feminine or masculine ideas about the kind of behaviour which at the time was seen as appropriate for their gender role in their culture? This remains to be seen.

The link to gender identity lies herein. The leader's life experiences not only form head teachers' personal values but also their gender identity. It may therefore be argued that a leader's gender-identity forming experiences directly influence the choice of preferred values. If inequities exist in the culture (Hofstede, 1998) regarding how women or men are able to develop their gender identities, then it follows that this inequity will cause

them to adopt different personal values, which, in turn, will influence how they are able to act out their leadership. Hall (1996) captures the essence of these concerns for leaders in the following quotation:

If men construct their masculinity and identity as a worker from messages that are different from those heard by women, then it might be anticipated that their construction of headship would also be different

(Hall, 1996, p. 201).

These messages are, however, often mixed and contradictory and with time, as individuals move between contexts, their experiences lead to a multiplicity of ever-changing identity formations. Over time, the leadership identity of head teachers is therefore likely to change as they move from different stages of headship and have experiences which impact upon them in various ways.

Gender therefore remains as an important variable of research. One of the most persistent issues concerns precisely gender identities, how they are formed, reproduced and sustained in families, schools and in society at large. Understanding how constructs like leadership, values and gender are shaped by gendered discourses is a necessary prerequisite in order to prevent the reproduction of gender inequalities.

3.6 Sex and Gender – Male and Female

The concepts gender, masculinity and femininity have been discussed in some detail above. This discussion has focused on the construction of gender identity as well as the ways in which adults develop different identities. Leadership identity is an example of such construction in relation to one particular aspect of an individual's personal and/or professional life. Among other such constructs are class, ethnicity, race and sexual orientation. It may, however, be helpful to examine these concepts in a more isolated manner, in their own right. This is not altogether straightforward, however, since concepts like masculinity and femininity are rarely defined except in relation to each other and to men and women. Below I attempt to unravel the nature of each concept as well as show their interconnectedness. This examination leads into a final discussion about their links to leadership and values.

At birth a distinction on the basis of sex is assigned to every person and this is rarely questioned. As for gender, it seems to be agreed that there are two main genders, male and female, which are socially, rather than biologically, constructed. Moreover, there is

within the social sciences a long history of “treating gender as something that is an internal understanding of oneself, a claimed gender, rather than focused around how one is recognized by others” (Paechter, 2006, p. 259). Even if neither all men nor all women reside in male or female bodies, respectively, most individuals probably feel relatively secure about being either female or male. This biological distinction does, however, not reveal how women’s or men’s gender identities, as either masculine or feminine, are constructed.

3.6.1 Forms of Gender Identities

There is a range of ways in which boys and girls can construct and enact their masculinity and femininity. These concepts, masculinity and femininity, refer to gender identities as a man and a woman, and they are historically and socially constructed categories which stipulate appropriate behaviors and identities for men and women (Sinclair, 1999, p. 50). Masculinity can moreover be viewed as the socially constructed behaviour of masculine subjects that is contextually driven, rather than a biological phenomenon that is particular to males (Pillay, 2006, p. 591). Paechter argues (2006), that the way we understand ourselves as masculine and feminine varies according to time, place and circumstances (p. 261). This gender construction, therefore, evolves in social interaction within a particular culture, society and timeframe. To complicate matters even further it is now widely accepted that in any social grouping there are a number of masculinities and femininities.

In general terms, “masculinity becomes ‘what men and boys’ do and femininity the Other of that” (Paechter, 2006, p. 254). This would not be complicated, except for the fact that we do not have a clear picture of what men and boys, or women and girls, do, since this varies considerably. For this reason, as Paechter has pointed out, “we end up attributing to masculinity ways of being that are found in dominant male groups in particular social circumstances (2006, p. 254). Many theorists refer to this as ‘hegemonic’ masculinity which Connell (1995) defines as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimation of patriarchy”. This, he argues, is a situation which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (p. 77).

It follows, therefore, that the elements which make of that which is labelled ‘hegemonic masculinity’ at any given time will vary. Earlier in the thesis (p. 63) Mac an Ghaill (1994) was cited explaining how the current masculine form was characterized by

heterosexuality, power, authority, aggression and technical competence (p. 12). Therefore, the values which this gender identity reflects are not just masculine but of a particular kind of masculinity that has become hegemonic over other types of both masculine and feminine identities.

Other forms of masculinities will co-exist with hegemonic masculinity but will not be privileged, indicating that not all men are equal (Sinclair, 1999, pp. 56-57). This implies that men in a society that may be defined as 'patriarchal' may experience subordination or marginalization on the basis of various social categories such as ethnicity or sexual orientation. In Sinclair's book 'Doing Management Differently' she discusses what she calls 'alternative masculinities' which do not "rest simply on a rejection of feminine values" (p. 67). Such different masculinities could involve stronger emphasis on relationships and care, or "nurturant masculinity" (p. 68).

Therefore, even if hegemonic masculinity may neither appeal to all men (see earlier discussion) nor fit what is found empirically, it becomes some sort of ideal-type construction of what men do in any particular society at a given time (Paechter, 2006).

From this perspective, if masculinities were to be positioned along an axis, 'hegemonic masculinity' would be at one end of the axis, while the other, 'subordinate', masculinities would be positioned along the axis from the least, to the most, subordinate. The less these forms of masculinity resemble the dominant masculinity, the more subordinate they will be.

Similarly, there are various femininities which may range from hyperfemininity on one end of the axis, to masculine femininity on the other, either of which might become dominant within a particular culture and timeframe. There can, however, "be no hegemonic femininity because being in an hegemonic position is ... about being in a position of power", something hyperfemininity does not carry (Paechter, 2006, p. 256). This is a situation that has an impact on men as well as women because a man who distances himself from hegemonic masculinity is relinquishing power (p. 256). For a more detailed discussion of this, see for instance Paechter (2006). As mentioned above there may be other dimensions or qualities that define different masculinities and femininities, such as the sexual dimension and class, ethnicity and race.

The unequal position of men and women in terms of gender identities has various, and serious, implications. As the discussion above indicates, many theorists have claimed

that the current leadership discourse is of a predominantly masculine nature. In terms of leadership, the values which underpin it and the gender of those who provide it, a continuous and critical exploration of the current leadership discourse is of paramount importance. Despite considerable discussion on all these issues earlier in the thesis and therefore being at risk of repeating myself, I shall nonetheless attempt to shed further light on them in the next section.

3.6.2 Leadership Identities

Earlier it was pointed out how the environment of schools in Iceland and elsewhere in the Western world has changed considerably in the past 10-15 years. These changes are seen by many to represent a move towards male perspectives and hegemonic masculine values (Blackmore, 1999; Grace, 1997; Marshall, 1990). These writings highlight how the concept of masculinity has gradually become the focus of attention within the field of educational administration.

This emphasis on masculinity is brought to the forefront in Chapters 1-3 through the writings of many contemporary theorists on the dominant leadership discourse of our time. For instance, Blackmore (p. 65) is cited as saying that “administration has become identified with particular ‘masculinist’ cultures which are hegemonic in particular administrative contexts” (1999, p. 29). Whitehead (p. 15) discussed the “distinct masculine character of the dominant discourse of performativity”, pointing out that this discourse may neither appeal to women nor to all men (1999, p. 110). Finally, Hargreaves (p. 20) refers to these changes in Western educational systems as a “...male world of market relations... (1994, p.113). This linking of masculinity and market forces is further supported by Sinclair (1999) who points out how early and subsequent work on “managerial masculinity” placed and enforced unquestioned values of instrumentalism, control, rationality, and either technical knowledge or hierarchy as the basis of authority” (p. 60). Sinclair refers to this current masculine, hegemonic leadership as ‘heroic leadership’ (1999, p. 37). In an attempt to explain why this particular construction of leadership has persisted, she says:

Good executives are portrayed as superhuman and larger than life; ‘bigger than themselves’, ‘the best in the world’, ‘the men at the top’ Leaders must demonstrate a capacity to rise above their technical or functional core to achieve transcendent wisdom; having ‘the ability to sit on top and understand the connections between things’. Only the most courageous and capable succeed

(p. 50).

This, Sinclair argues, is why Australian leaders have so little real interest in change and why there is “contempt in managerial quarters when the possibility of part-time work or job-sharing is raised”. Apparently leading is not seen as a part-time job.

These writers use various words to describe or define the nature of this current hegemonic masculine discourse on educational leadership. This discourse is seen to emphasize rational technology (Blackmore, 1999), control and values of technical knowledge or hierarchy as the basis of authority (Sinclair, 1999, p. 60), rules and regulations (Lumby with Coleman, 2007) and performativity and effectiveness (Guðbjörnsdóttir, 2001; Thrupp and Wilmott, 2003). All these words and concepts are common in relation to another popular concept, that of ‘managerialism’.

To summarize: Among the most prominent concepts used to describe the current leadership discourse are effectiveness, efficiency, performativity and competition, which are seen to represent stereotypical masculine values. The same applies to an emphasis on power hierarchies, control and inflexible rules and regulations.

3.6.3 Values and Leadership Identities

As already pointed out, educational policies which emphasize values such as effectiveness, efficiency and competition have different consequences for the role of head teachers than, for instance, those of pedagogy, care and co-operation. This is why the current hegemony of a particular kind of masculine values which are seen to reflect the former cluster of values rather than the latter, can have important consequences for educational practice.

This thesis has discussed recent studies which suggest that contemporary school leaders, men and women alike, have expressed, or express, similar values (Anna Guðrún Edvardsdóttir, 2004; Coleman, 2000, 2005; Hall, 1996). Their findings suggest that women and men head teachers in Iceland and elsewhere favour a leadership style which has little in common with the hegemonic masculine leadership described above. This research shows that both men and women favour a style that values people and collaborative approaches and that they emphasize the values of care, co-operation and democratic, consultative, informal approaches and relationships with students and staff. This emphasis is typically assigned to women and the style is most often labelled feminine (Coleman, 2002).

If the above findings do in fact reflect the working reality of the researchees, the current oft-cited leadership discourse and the alleged masculine values that underpin it may not appeal to either the women or the men heads. This may, therefore, not be a form of leadership identity that contemporary heads can identify with. An environment which promotes an educational policy and vision with which only a small minority of educational leaders can align themselves is not likely to fare well in practice. Such a situation would validate Sinclair's claim for the necessity of reconstructing leadership (1999, p. vii). This point will be addressed again in Chapter 10, 'Recommendations for Policy and Practice'.

3.7 Women Leaders in the Educational Marketplace

Ten years ago, Gold (1997, p. 7) observed: "Management in education in western Europe is a tempestuous and fraught activity, especially at a time when most phases of education are expected to survive in the marketplace". The year before, (1996), Gold had pointed out that many people working in education were having difficulties because the current competitive management styles based on efficiency and productivity did not correspond to their educational values (Gold, 1996, p. 422).

More recently, Gold and other researchers (Campbell et al. 2003; Gold et al.; 2003; Coleman 2002; Hall, 1996; Strachan 1999) have looked into the possible consequences of women leaders being caught up between the demands of the government, on one hand, and their own values on the other. All of them conclude that even if this may cause some tension for the women leaders, they manage to shape their positions to fit their aspirations, to make the job fit their mindscapes, their values. Therefore, in this research, the agency of the women leaders to act is not seen to be impaired or restricted by environmental factors. However, it is important to note that in Coleman's survey of secondary women heads in the 1990s, the women felt they could conduct themselves in ways that are free of the expectations held by their male colleagues (Coleman 2002, p. 157) but, "that more positive slant on being a woman is not as apparent with the 2004 survey" (2005, p. 33) which may indicate that "the vulnerability of heads in relation to increased accountability may have meant that the freedom of action that women mentioned in connection with being a head in the 1990's has been curtailed" (p. 33).

It must also be remembered that in two of the four studies, the samples were based on women leaders who had been labelled either “very successful” (Hall 1996), or “outstanding principals” (Gold et al., 2003, p. 127). It is likely that these principals’ perceptions of being successful gave them the necessary strength to uphold their values against external pressure. Moreover, women who become senior managers in the British labour market have been recruited from a very specific group of “highly credentialed” women (Reay and Ball, 2000, p. 147).

The fact remains that in the 1990’s, and again in 2004, a large proportion of English female secondary heads reported having encountered gender-related barriers to becoming head teachers and also after they took up their positions (Coleman, 2005, p. 42). It seems plausible that the experience of having overcome discrimination and sexism from the time of applying for headship and throughout their career while operating in a context “where they are not ‘supposed’ to be” (Coleman, 2005, p. 28) made them tough and strong.

Bourdieu (2001) has argued that from the very beginning, all public organizations have been shaped by men. Bearing in mind that organisations shape people, this observation becomes significant. Reay and Ball (2000) argue that the roles that women undertake, as well as the context they work in, shapes female leadership in practice, not the other way around, or that at least it works both ways. In the light of this, it may be naïve to assume that all women who take on headship invariably are strong enough, aware enough or in a situation that enables them to shape their roles to fit their vision of headship and the values on which they wish to base their every day practice. Reay and Ball (2000) conclude that “the inherent tension between being female and being a leader invariably results in adaptations and adjustments and the assumption of a femininity that is more congruent with leadership than traditional variants of femininity (p. 147).

Similarly, Blackmore (1999), referring to structural changes in Victoria, Australia, addresses the ethical implications and has warned that the power of women to change structure is being emphasized at the cost of failing to understand how structures change women.

Many feminist principals expressed concern about the contradictions this [structural changes] raised between their own theory and practice - in being unable to practice their preferred mode of leadership due to the policy imperatives and material conditions of their work

(p. 156).

Therefore, even if women adopt a particular style, it cannot be assumed it is because it is the most favoured one. For instant, in one of Coleman's recent studies (2005), she observed a newer and a more directive style which was characterized by adjectives such as decisive, determined, visionary, challenging, authoritative and strategic. Coleman points out how important it is to explore the underlying reasons for adopting a style, "which has more in common with the target driven, potentially managerial style that may be being demanded of today's leaders" (2005, pp. 36-37).

3.8 Research Questions

In Chapter 1, it was established that the main purpose of the present study was to shed light on the interplay between values, gender and leadership behaviour of head teachers in a context of social change. This should lead into the development of a theory about the impact of values on head teacher's actions in particular when facing difficult decisions and value conflict situations. The study attempts to answer the following questions which guide the design of the study.

How are the values of women and men head teachers reflected in their narratives?

How do values influence their actions?

How do women and men head teachers react when they perceive their own values to be in conflict with those of other school stakeholders, public policy or market forces?

How do gender and gendered discourses impact on the values and actions of women and men head teachers?

3.9 Summary

In this chapter, gender was used as a lens to examine literature on educational leadership. The discussion opened with a short review of the development of theories of leadership, mainly in the absence of women, followed by an examination of research on women as educational leaders in the past 25 years. This review showed how women were absent from the field of educational administration until the 1980s but since then, research on women leaders has grown considerably. Recently, studies which focus on the articulated values of educational leaders have emerged. Interwoven was a discussion of gender socialization and gender identity formation and its implications for leadership

behaviour. The present study should be seen as a part of this movement to extend knowledge about educational leadership and values, but with a particular gender focus.

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.0 Introduction

This chapter is an account of the methodology and methods chosen for data gathering, the analysis and interpretation of data and the reasons behind these choices. Because methodology is “much more than methods or techniques or tools for research” (Morrison, 2007, p. 19), I use the word *methodology* as a generic term that refers to the research design, the general logic and theoretical perspectives for my research. I use the word *method* for the specific techniques I use for data gathering and analysis (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003, p. 31).

The chapter opens with a discussion of two theoretical perspectives, symbolic interactionism and feminism, and of the research paradigms for the study. This is followed by a description of the research process and the methods used for data collection and a discussion about the main analytical tools. The chapter also includes a discussion of important ethical consideration and it concludes with a discussion of validity and reliability followed by a short summary.

4.1 A Feminist Perspective on Knowledge and Research

Through my academic work as a teacher and researcher, over a number of years, I have come to acknowledge how biased the literature on educational leadership is. This has led me to question the validity of the ‘knowledge’ this literature presents, how it was arrived at, by whom and for whom. Gradually I have started to question why this particular knowledge, ‘men’s knowledge’, on administration and leadership has become more authoritative than other forms of knowledge. Therefore, from the first initial, tentative steps on my journey toward the Ph.D. degree, I knew that one way or another, gender would need to be addressed. I did not, however have formulated ideas about what this might entail. This may have been fortunate because I was soon to find out that this commitment required knowledge and skills I did not have. As it turned out, my knowledge in feminist theories and feminist research was limited and the awareness I had about my own feminist stance was superficial and in need of both sharpening and refinement.

This journey led me to the realization that while philosophy had offered many categories and questions relating to the nature of reality and the construction of knowledge, these were highly contested. Epistemological and ontological disagreements on what claims could be made about connections between knowledge and reality, or whether such claims were possible, prevailed. However, it was not until I was well into my Ph.D. studies that I realized how much feminist theory had contributed to questioning the construction of all theory and knowledge. I came to acknowledge how it had revealed that many of the humanistic values that dominate Western society reflect masculine versions of knowledge and truth (Francis 2002, p. 322).

For decades, feminist researchers have been arguing that research on men is seen as mainstream and central, while research on women and/or gender issues is often considered a special topic and not central to the understanding of organizational behaviour (Shakeshaft, 1987a, pp. 141-142). These researchers reject the assumption that there is only one truth which can be discovered through objective measures. From a feminist perspective, claiming that there is only one truth ignores the gendered nature of the discourse on research. Such a perspective assumes that what is true for men is equally true for women even when that 'truth' is based on or arrived at through biased methods and thus only reflects masculine versions of that truth (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2003, pp. 8-10; Usher, 1996, p. 125). The history of educational administration as a field of theory and practice is a case in point (Blackmore, 1999; Reynolds, 1995; Shakeshaft, 1987b, Strachan, 1993), (see Chapter 3).

The absence of women from the field of research, whether as researchers or researchees, has important implications when it comes to making knowledge claims on the basis of research findings. One of feminists' major claims is that the study of epistemology is central to the way in which social sciences examine the relationship between human thought and social existence (Usher, 1996, p.126). This epistemological concern is perhaps best captured in one of the most powerful criticisms on theory and practice within the social sciences, that it disregards or distorts the experience of women, while generalizing from experiences of males to people in general (Stanley and Wise 1993, pp. 27-29).

Because of this alleged masculine bias within the social sciences, feminists have engaged in a debate about the need for research which would capture the 'realities' of both women and men. These writers use different terminology and express somewhat

different, though overlapping views, when describing feminist research. Ramazanoglu and Holland (2003) argue that one way of producing justifiable knowledge of gender relations is by applying a ‘feminist methodology’ (p. 10) which is:

...distinctive to the extent that is shaped by feminist theory, politics and ethics and grounded in women’s experience... .What is distinctive is the particular positioning of theory, epistemology and ethics that enables the feminist researchers to question existing ‘truths’ and explore relations between knowledge and power
(2003, p. 16).

While Ramazanoglu and Holland talk about a distinctive feminist methodology, Stanley and Wise (1993) refer to “epistemological possibilities that exist” (p. 190). Leonard, (2001) on the other hand, maintains that feminist research has neither a specific epistemology nor methodology, a view which is endorsed by Schwandt (2007), who claims that “there is no single feminist epistemology” (p. 110). Leonard (2001) maintains, however, that feminist research has certain characteristics, such as having an emancipatory political agenda with the purpose of changing the situation of a “particular constituency” (p. 191).

For me, as a researcher, this means that I can not understand my interactions as a social scientist with others, without simultaneously thinking through what, to me, constitutes legitimate knowledge of social life. It also refers to my political commitment and responsibilities as an inquirer into the nature and meaning of human affairs (Schwandt, 2001, p. 73). In the next section I attempt to locate myself as a feminist scholar and describe how my feminist stance informs my methodological choices and decisions.

4.1.1 My Feminist Stance

In this study, my feminist perspective means that I am examining gendered discourses, masculine or feminine, and their impact on head teachers decisions and actions. This perspective is informed by postmodernism in the sense that I am examining educational and leadership discourses in the environment of schools. These discourses determine what is seen true, natural or normal at any given time. In applying the term *postmodern* I take the position of Ramazanoglu and Holland (2003, p. 84), who “loosely group post structuralism and postmodernism as postmodern”. When these two perspectives, that of feminism and postmodernism, are interwoven, they are often referred to as ‘postmodern feminism’. Because there are aspects to postmodernism that I cannot relate to, I see my platform as that of a feminist researcher, informed by postmodern perspectives. Below, I attempt to explain how I situate myself as a researcher and why.

While feminists have been advocating the inclusion of *gender* and *woman* in all research, postmodernists have challenged the idea of a stable self and a coherent category of *woman*. Foucault, for instance believed that the self was unstable and located in different discourses and in this sense, an individual does not exist (Francis, 2002; 2004). This argument has sparked a lively debate between feminist and postmodern writers about the relation between gender and the self. If there is no such thing as a self with attributes that persist over time, gender can hardly be seen as a feature of every woman's identity. But if there is nothing that all women have in common, it seems that there are no interests that all women share and no common ground for feminists to stand on. A principal aim of feminist politics is to overcome the subordination of women. This claim rests on certain basic value judgements or truth claims (McNay, 2004). Exponents of postmodern thought (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2003, p. 85) have questioned how feminist knowledge has become constituted and established. However, "feminist politics requires judgement between claims to knowledge in order to identify unjust power relations and provide accurate understandings of what might be changed" (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2003, p. 94).

Feminist theory is rooted in the demands of an emancipatory politics (McNay, 2004). It is therefore necessary to decide which conceptions of gender best serve the aim of emancipatory political theory and politics. Therefore, as McNay (2004) points out, the critical question is to what extent a philosophical form of critique, such as that offered by post structuralism, should be adopted (p. 4).

Even if I find it easy to relate to the idea of changing identities, this does not imply that I think that there is no unified being, no *self*. Despite what some poststructuralists would claim, I believe that some elements of our identity can be kept through different interactions with the environment (Francis, 2004; Rodríguez et. al, 2006). Our self is formed from life experiences and unlike our identity, the self is independent of any relative comparison to anyone else. Our self is therefore unique and specific to the individual person (Branson, 2006, p. 7). On the issue of self and personality, my conceptual position is close to that presented by Francis (2002) who argues that "while we position and present ourselves differently in various interactive contexts, some aspects of our beliefs and/or presentation of self may also remain the same across contexts" (p. 323).

In the light of the above, and after quite extensive reading and rather painstaking self-reflection, I came to the realization that I was indeed a feminist. In this light, I therefore asked myself what such a statement might mean in terms of doing a Ph.D. I believed that it was important for me to be clear about why I wanted my research to be feminist and on what assumptions I based my claim that gender should be an integrated part of the study. The first step was to acknowledge that while admitting to be a feminist, I was unable to situate myself within one particular feminist theory or perspective. The only way forward was to adopt ideas and concepts from diverse feminist sources and try to make them my own for the benefit of this particular study. These considerations have led me to the following premises on which I base my work:

- I do not question that inequalities between men and women do exist. This applies to my country, as elsewhere, although the extent and nature of the subordination of women varies.
- I have learned that women's access to power is unequal to that of men.
- I acknowledge that the categories of women and men exist, just as those of race, ethnicity and sexuality.
- I believe that in spite of various differences, women have some common conditions of gendered existence. These differences cut through social and cultural divisions between them.
- I am convinced that it is important to illuminate the significance of gender in society.
- I have learned that the subordination of women and the reasons behind it are, to a great extent, subliminal and need to be unravelled if equality is to be accomplished.
- I believe that by highlighting the status and situation of women, while studying both men and women, it may be possible to give women, as a silenced minority group, a voice.

As the list indicates, I want to be, or become, "a knowing feminist" (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2004, p. 84) attempting to make new connections between ideas of gender, experiences of gender and realities of gender.

This study examines values and their impact on the actions of head teachers in a context of recent changes in the environment of Icelandic schools. It also attempts to shed light on how gender may interact with leadership and values in this context. Throughout the study, gender is therefore used as a lens to examine head teachers' words and actions in the particular context of educational restructuring in Iceland. This perspective influences the questions I ask and makes me alert to the power relations in the research settings which I try to overcome by establishing collaborative and non-exploitative relationships (Creswell, 1998, p. 83). This perspective also means that I will keep an open mind to areas which can be changed for the betterment of the researchees and seek to challenge gender inequity (Francis, 1999, 2001; Guðbjörnsdóttir, 2001; Leonard, 2001). Finally, the analytical tools have been chosen and adapted with reference to all the three main constructs of the study: leadership, gender and values. They will be discussed later in the chapter.

4.2 The Perspective of Symbolic Interactionism on Knowledge and Research

The focus of this study and the research questions led to a qualitative approach because of the need for an in-depth inquiry concerning head teachers' values, the motivations underpinning them and the impact of gender on their values and actions. Last but not least, this approach will allow for an exploration of head teacher's own perceptions of their roles.

Qualitative research is most commonly associated with schools which fall broadly within what is known as the interpretivist sociological tradition, particularly that of phenomenology (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003, p. 22; Mason, 2003, p. 2). Phenomenologists view reality as a social construction, a research position which, in recent years, has been inhabited most closely by those who follow the postmodernist schools of thought (Coleman and Briggs, 2007, p. 24).

The phenomenological paradigm places the emphasis on the way human beings give meanings to their lives (Coleman and Briggs, 2007, p. 20). In this sense, my study is phenomenological, attempting to describe the meaning of the lived experiences for several head teachers about the concepts *values* and *gender* (Creswell, 1998, p. 51; Schwandt, 2007, p. 225) while not claiming that my data contains 'the truth' or the only way of recording the empirical world.

To ground these assumptions I have adopted the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism which “views life as an unfolding process in which individuals interpret their environment and act upon it on the basis of that interpretation” (Morrison, 2007, p. 18). Symbolic interactionism is a well-established, particular type of phenomenological framework (Bogdan and Biklen, (2003, p. 22). It is considered to be a pragmatic approach to social research born from the thought of George Herbert Mead (1863-1931). Mead maintained that every person was a social construct, that we come to be persons through interaction with our society (Crotty, p. 62). Mead’s ideas on symbolic interactionism influenced Herbert Blumer (1900-1987), who developed them further. Like all other frameworks informing qualitative studies, symbolic interactionism comes in many forms and is therefore not easily summarized briefly (Schwandt, 2007, pp. 283-284). According to Schwandt (p. 283) the ‘Blumer-Mead’ version of symbolic interactionism rests on the following three premises.

- Humans act toward the objects and people in their environment based on the meanings these objects and people have for them.

In other words, it is the meaning that people read into events, situations, things and people that determine their reaction, rather than the situation itself.

- These meanings derive from the social interaction (communication, broadly understood) between and among individuals. Communication is symbolic because we communicate through language and other symbols and in communicating create significant symbols.

As people interact, meaning of such things are therefore learned, defined, altered and maintained

- Meanings are established and modified through an interpretive process undertaken by the individual actor.

This interpretive process involves individuals who interact symbolically, with the help of language in a self-reflective manner. Symbolic interactionism therefore claims that humans are purposive agents who confront a world that must be interpreted rather than a world composed of a set of stimuli to which the individual must react.

In this study, therefore, I assume that participants construct and reconstruct meanings and meaningful concepts about gender, leadership identity, masculinity and femininity,

subject and subjectivity, agency and the like. From early on, the head teachers have interacted with agents such as their parents, teachers and others they perceive as having the authority to make the formal definitions of these concepts and what they stand for. At later stages in life they have continued to negotiate these meanings in interaction with meaningful agents in their environment.

The study is further informed by the research paradigm of constructivism which Crotty (2003, p. 18) refers to as “the epistemology claimed in most qualitative approaches today”. As a philosophical perspective, social constructivism emphasizes how individuals, alone, and with others, shape and are shaped through, social, linguistic and historical context (Schwandt, 1997, p. 19). According to constructivism, there is no objective truth waiting to be discovered: rather, truths or meanings come into existence through our engagement with the realities of our world. There is thus no meaning without a mind (Crotty, 2003). In other words, our consciousness is always the medium through which research occurs. There is therefore no method or technique of doing research other than through the medium of the researcher (Stanley and Wise, 1993, p. 57). The primary data sources in such research are people and their interpretations, perceptions and meanings (Mason, 2002, p. 56). Francis (2002), points out that social constructivism and post structuralist work has helped to deconstruct the humanist assumption that we are born with a complete, fixed personality which remains constant over time and in all social situations (p. 323).

In this study, the ‘reality’ under scrutiny is that of Icelandic head teachers, women and men. With their help, through their narratives, their views, perceptions and interpretations, I hope to reconstruct their reality rather than the only reality of headship experiences. I am thus acknowledging that “there are people out there in the world who say and do things” (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003, p. 24) which I, as a qualitative researcher, can record.

This perspective has particular importance in relation to gender which, as research shows, (see Chapter 3) is constructed, consciously or unconsciously, in interaction with other social agents, within and outside people’s families. It is also closely related to values, and the application of particular values to particular situation.

4.3 Case Study

With reference to the main features of the research perspective of symbolic interactionism, I believe that a case study approach is appropriate. According to Creswell (1998), a case study can be seen as “an exploration of a ‘bounded system’, or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (1998, p. 61). A case, in this sense, can refer to, and contribute to our knowledge about, places, events, individuals and social, political and related phenomenon (Yin, 2003, p. 1). In this study the boundaries of the case are defined in terms of ten Icelandic head teachers. However, even if this study can be seen to involve ten cases, each involving a head teacher, a deputy head and documentary sources, I see this primarily as a single case study of leadership, values and gender.

Case studies most often involve multiple data sources but in the present study the primary method is interviews, with documentary data as a secondary source.

The literature on case studies is vast and voluminous, involving almost countless descriptions and definitions. It follows therefore that case studies have a wide applicability. One variation, the ‘educational case study’, is defined below.

Educational case study [is where] many researchers using case study methods are concerned neither with social theory nor with evaluative judgement, but rather with the understanding of educational action

(Stenhouse, 1985 quoted in Bassey, 1999, p. 28).

The above definition, from Stenhouse, is almost 25 years old, yet it can be applied to the present study, because it aims at what Stenhouse calls “the understanding of an educational action”.

For instance Schramm (1971, quoted in Yin, p. 12), claims that the essence of a case study is that “it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented and with what results”. This, he says, is the essence of all case studies. This understanding is fully applicable to this study, where I try to illuminate head teachers’ impact on decision making. Yin, (2003) however, does not agree with Schramm in regarding the topic of a decision as the major focus of a case study (p. 12).

Yin's (2003) main criterion for choosing the case study as a strategy is if the intention is to examine contemporary events while the relevant behaviour cannot be manipulated (p. 7). In Yin's opinion, a case study strategy is preferred when the inquirer seeks answers to 'how' or 'why' questions. To summarize the above main perspectives, a case study can facilitate an understanding of educational actions, such as decisions, by asking 'how' and 'why' questions. All of this is done in the present study. Head teachers share vignettes about value-related dilemmas which involved decision making. They are asked 'how' they handled the dilemmas and then their decisions and their narratives together were used to shed light on 'why' they responded the way they did.

4.4 Sampling

As mentioned earlier, this study involves head teachers and deputy heads in Reykjavík, the capital of Iceland. The study includes a total of 10 head teachers and 9 deputies in compulsory schools (schools covering the elementary and lower-secondary levels of school, for children aged 6-16) in Reykjavík. These head teachers account for 28% out of the 36 of these schools in the city, which should be reasonably representative of Reykjavík.

Below I provide my rationale for choosing this particular sample and an explanation of the manner in which I chose it.

I chose this school level mainly because of my 20-year experience as a school teacher, a head teacher and later a lecturer on school management, mainly for head teachers in this type of school. For me it is important to draw on this experience, in addition to which I have a sense of moral and professional commitment towards this level of school more than others. I also find it important that both male and female head teachers should be able to relate to the findings. In terms of theoretical development in the field of educational administration, new insights and knowledge about both women and men head teachers are becoming increasingly important. In the Icelandic context, such a study is likely to be seen as worthwhile and valuable for head teachers at large.

4.4.1 The Head Teachers and their Background

The city of Reykjavík is divided into ten school districts with 36 public elementary and lower secondary schools. The city has expanded considerably in the past decade, resulting in numerous new schools in the newly-populated areas of the city. The schools

vary in size, with pupil numbers ranging from 200 to 800, but most of them have 350-450 pupils. Schools in which the 10 head teachers included in this study work, represent seven of these ten districts. School *G* is smallest in the sample, with 300 pupils; the largest school, *F* has almost 800. Six of the schools are inner-city schools; four are suburban. Five of the schools are elementary-and lower secondary (6-15) but the other five are elementary schools (6-12). Details about the schools and their settings is provided in Appendix 2.

This sample is theoretical or purposive, in the sense that it involves the selection of a group to study on the basis of its relevance to the focus of my research (Mason, 2002, p. 124). In order to answer questions relating to the interplay of values, leadership and gender, I needed to interview women and men. I further decided to have equal numbers of participants of each sex in order to represent the current proportion of men and women head teachers in the city. Finally, this choice enabled me to include representatives from seven out of then ten school districts in the city, involving both one of the oldest school and the newest. However, the main reason for limiting the choice of schools to the city of Reykjavík was practical, being based on a convenience sampling strategy (Punch, 2006). As a part-time student at the Institute of Education, University of London, and resident of the capital, Reykjavík, the choice of venue is to a great extent a question of physical access, especially in the winter. I work full-time at the Iceland University of Education and this calls for the schools to be located within easy access of my work. This limits the choice to Reykjavík or the Greater Reykjavik area, which covers approximately a 15 -20 km radius from the city. This includes all the largest elementary and lower secondary schools (with pupil numbers of 350-800) but excludes all head teachers and deputy heads in the smallest Icelandic schools, some of which only have 12-15 students. Fifteen years ago, this would have had severe implications for my study, since women head teachers usually only occupied these roles but, as stated earlier, this is gradually changing. One of the benefits of focusing on city schools exclusively is that the recent changes in the school environment may impact differently on the larger city schools than the smaller rural schools. Appendix 3 provides some details about the head teachers and their background.

As mentioned before, the gender dimension in this study is of particular importance for various reasons. In Iceland, there were few women head teachers until 15 years ago. Typically, they entered headship at a later date than men did, followed a different route,

were predominantly in elementary schools (for the 6-12 age group) while the men were either in elementary and lower-secondary (for children aged 6-15) or exclusively in lower-secondary schools (for age group 13-15) and the women tended to work in the smaller, rural schools. In the past 10-15 years this pattern has been changing in every aspect with women now holding about 50% of headship positions in Iceland. Whether these factors have called for women to adjust to a system, to a role and predominant values which were already in place, or for men to adjust to a female-dominated workforce, or both, remains to be seen but it is important to look into these areas. This will underscore the view that values are not fixed constructs but are susceptible to change like other social constructs.

4.4.2 The Deputy Heads

As mentioned earlier, the deputy heads were not included in the original research design. After the pilot study, I became convinced that their participation was, if not necessary, then at least important for various reasons. A few years ago, when middle managers became full-time members of the professional staff, they took over some of the administrative duties which deputies had been responsible for earlier. This made it possible for the head teachers to involve deputy heads, to a greater extent than before, in major professional school projects and long-term planning for their schools. Now, deputies are therefore responsible for some of the work which used to be primarily on head teachers' desks. This does not mean that head teachers now have less to do: on the contrary it seems, since many new services are now required of the schools. These changes in the management structure of the schools have had considerable impact on head teachers. Examining the changing role of head teachers without including the views of deputies therefore seemed likely to present an incomplete picture.

Like the head teachers, the deputies were asked about the recent changes in the school environment. Their narratives are an important contribution to providing a comprehensive picture of the present situation in schools and the developments leading up to it. Deputies' views also shed light on the values they see as basic to the schools in which they work. Last but not least, the participation of deputy heads serves the purpose of triangulating the data and thus validating both head teachers' own observations and my own observations as a researcher.

Having reached this decision, I asked the head teachers to ask one of their middle managers to meet me for an interview session. By using the word 'middle manager' I

indicated that the head teachers were free to choose either a deputy head or another person from their senior management team, with whom they worked closely. As it turned out, all the head teachers, except one, chose to ask their deputy heads. An interview schedule for the deputy heads is presented in Appendix 4.

4.4.3 Gaining Access to the Field

The nature of my study does not require permission from others than those who directly participate in it, i.e. the head teachers and the deputy head teachers. Therefore, I did not need the permission from the Data Committee or other agencies such as the Local Education Authorities in Reykjavík.

At the beginning, I contacted all the head teachers either by phone or e-mail or both. I sent them all a written letter in which I explained the context of my inquiry, gave them the questions which I intended to use to guide the interviews and explained that our conversations would be confidential. I acknowledged my awareness of the time pressures under which head teachers work and left it entirely to them to choose a day and a time within a span of two-three weeks. As has been pointed out already, I also asked them to do me the favour of talking to one member of their senior management team. After receiving positive feedback, I sent the deputy heads, and the one middle manager, a letter similar to the one that I had earlier sent to the head teachers.

All the head teachers agreed to participate and so did the deputy heads. One of the head teachers seemed to be a little reluctant at the beginning. Before the formal beginning of our first interview, she explained that because her school was fairly new and seen to be progressive, visits had become a little too time-consuming. After the school administrators had informed me of their willingness to participate, I sent an e-mail to all of them, expressing my gratitude and deciding on a day and time for our first interview. I experienced no practical problems in gaining access to the schools and carrying out the study.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Schwandt (2001) points out that, in the widest sense, the subject matter of ethics is the justification of human actions as those actions affect others (p. 73). In this study I used mainly Kvale's (1996), "ethical issues of the seven research stages" as a guideline in the preparation of the interviews and in the interview settings. When asking the participants for an interview, I first explained my current status as a Ph. D. student and stated my

purpose. In the interview situation, I emphasised that their personal identities would be concealed, the schools made anonymous and our discussions would be confidential. I pointed out that the report would be written in English and would not become a public document. I also prepared a written document in which the participants gave their formal consent and I, as a researcher, promised total confidentiality. A copy of these letters is provided in Appendices 5 (head teachers) and 6 (deputy heads). I did not bring up the issue of ownership of data such as transcripts of interviews and the issue did not come up in relation to the interviews (Kvale, 1996, p. 111).

One of the ethical concerns in this study is that values are personal and therefore they are sensitive. Because head teachers were asked to share a dilemma, preferably one which they saw as value-related, they should, however, have been in no doubt as to the nature of the information I was seeking. Yet they could not know in what way their narratives would be interpreted when it came to analysing the data. I was particularly aware of my ethical responsibility as a researcher when I was trying to locate head teachers' motivational basis with the help of Hodgkinson's model (1991), (see Chapter 2 and later in this chapter).

Another concern is how to present documents pertaining to individual schools without revealing their identity. In order to secure anonymity these documents are referred to in general terms, as school prospectus or school handbooks. If special editions or publications are listed, their titles have been changed. For the same reason, all the interviewees have pseudo-names and their age as well as that of their schools has been changed. The difference in age varies between 1-3 years and the same goes for the schools. This is necessary because many people know, for instance, which school is the oldest in the city and who the youngest head teachers are.

A third ethical concern in this study also relates to the fact that Reykjavík is a small city and because I was a head teacher in the city for ten years, I either knew the head teachers or knew of them. While this situation was undoubtedly facilitative in gaining access and generating trust, it also gave some reason for ethical concern, in particular, in relation to the power position of researcher and researchee. All the head teachers were former colleagues, either from the time I was a school teacher or after I became a head teacher. I had known one of them for thirty years. The others I had known, or known of, for 10-15 years, but I did not know any of the deputy heads. The head teachers knew me as a former colleague and knew of me as a university lecturer. Some of them have

attended my in-service courses, but none of them had been my students in my present post at the Iceland University of Education. I am not in a position to say if, or how, this may have affected these head teachers as my interviewees. In a similar manner, I do not know, whether, and if so how, being a woman researcher affected the participants or me as a researcher, but I am aware that all of this may have had an impact. It is, however, necessary to point out, that because of the smallness of Iceland, it is quite common, especially for individuals working within academia, to play many and shifting roles in the life of the same or the similar group of people. Within the sphere of education, it is common for people to start their careers as school teachers, then continue their education to obtain a degree and come back to work with former colleagues in the roles of academic lecturers. In this study, therefore, my status may be seen as that of an ‘insider/outsider’. It is, however, my hope that my awareness of the possible dangers of having ‘insider’ knowledge, the respect I have for my colleagues and ten years of distancing myself from the role of head teacher, worked towards a counterbalance in this context. Finally, knowledge which is derived from having been ‘inside’ is valuable and can also enhance validity of a study.

An additional important consideration is my own values, which always enter the research process and may bias research either by causing an “undue influence of opinion” or because I, as the researcher, fail to reflect on my own values (Griffiths, 1998, p. 47). As a researcher, I therefore need to acknowledge the difference between my interviewees’ opinions and my own value judgements, which inevitably are an integrated part of the research but should not influence it (Griffiths, 1998). This emphasis on minimising bias is also the most practical way of achieving validity, since bias may occur either through my own characteristics and/or the respondents’ as well as through the content of the questions (Cohen and Manion, 1994). This is a reminder to avoid the tendency to seek answers that support any preconceived notions I may have, avoid misperceptions of what my respondents are saying and making sure my respondents understand my questions (p. 282). Being alert to my own stance and avoiding letting it impact my researchees’ opinions and narratives is therefore of paramount importance. Last but not least, my feminist approach to ethics is distinguishable by its criticism of male biases in topics, issues and theories that characterize traditional Western ethics (Schwandt, 2007, p. 111).

Ethical concerns aside, having been a head teacher in the same city as my respondents, with a first-hand knowledge of the role of head teachers in that context, having strong

opinions and beliefs about head teachers and being likely to have preconceived ideas about both the job and the people may all make it difficult for me to see places and situations in a fresh light and also make me a vulnerable research candidate in relation to validity. For me as a researcher, there may be no other option than to be particularly alert to both the possible pitfalls and the benefits of the situation.

4.6 Methods of Data Collection

Data collection started with a pilot study in one school in June and another in October 2004. In June 2004, I interviewed one woman head teacher and in October the same year, I interviewed a head teacher and a deputy head in the same school, both of them male. This discrepancy in approach between the first to the second interview is due to the original idea having been to focus only on head teachers. In July 2004, however, between the first and the second pilot interviews, I came to the conclusion that it would be beneficial to include members of the senior management team but preferably deputies, in the study. Therefore, when the second half of the pilot study was carried out in autumn 2004, the deputy head was included. The process of inclusion was related above.

Formal fieldwork for the larger study began in April 2005 and continued throughout June. The participants in this were four head teachers (three women and one man) and four middle managers (two women and two men). In July 2005, the total number of interviewees was 11, six head teachers and five deputy heads. This amounts to approximately half the sample (10 head teachers and 9 deputies). In May-June 2006 the remaining 5 head teachers and 4 deputies were interviewed. By the end, ten head teachers and nine deputy heads in Reykjavík had been interviewed.

The qualitative approach chosen for this study indicates that it aims at understanding the meaning of human action (Schwandt, 2001). It also suggests that the analysis of the data will be inductive and concepts and theories are discovered after data have been collected (Gall, Borg, and Gall, 1996).

4.6.1 Interviewing

Within the interpretive framework of this case study, in-depth, semi-structured interviews are the main mode of collecting data. Interviewing is seen as a family of research approaches that have only one thing in common: conversation between people in which one person has the role of researcher (Arksey and Knight 1999, p. 2).

Schwandt (2001) describes interviews as a particular kind of discursive narrative where the meanings are contextually grounded and jointly constructed by interviewee and respondent (p. 136). Interviews revolve around increased understanding. The joint negotiation of meaning of results in an interactive dialogue, often identified with feminist research, which should facilitate the researcher's understanding (Creswell 1998, pp. 83-84). This type of interview rejects the positivist methodology, where objectivity is often "equated with masculinity" (Robson, 1993, p. 2).

Patton (1996) describes three basic approaches to collecting qualitative data through interviewing. At one end are interviews which are highly structured with regard to the questions asked, the order in which they are asked and the way they are phrased. At the other end are interviews which are unstructured, relying only on ideas and questions which come up as the discussion evolves (1996, p. 309). The approach I have chosen for this study lies somewhere between these two. The interviews are semi-structured in the sense that a few basic questions are decided upon beforehand but new ideas and questions are acknowledged as they emerge through the interviews. Semi-structured interviews are the most common and diverse of the interview types (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p. 2) and bear close resemblance to what Cohen (1994) calls "unstructured interviews" which he describes as being open to situations and having greater flexibility and freedom. "The research purposes govern the questions asked [but] their content, sequence and wording are entirely in the hands of the interviewer" (p. 273).

Questions about values are not about knowledge in the traditional sense; rather, they are about self-knowledge and awareness of self. Cohen (1994, quoting Tuckman, 1972) talks about three types of information for gaining access to information "inside a person's head".

- What a person knows or knowledge and/or information.
- What a person likes or dislikes such as values and preferences.
- What a person thinks or attitudes and beliefs (p. 272).

It is this kind of 'knowledge' which is at the forefront in this study. The type of interview which is used to generate data about values is a blend of questions and answers and a discussion about ethical problems that face head teachers in schools. The head teachers are not asked directly about their values, rather, an attempt is made to shed light on their value orientation through their narratives and the dialogue between

them and me as the researcher. The head teachers are also asked to give a few examples of how they arrived at what they saw as a satisfactory/good solution in difficult situations in their work or critical incidents.

4.6.2 In-Depth Interviews

Seidman (1998) describes a model of interviewing which involves a series of separate interviews with each participant which he finds important in order to allow “the interviewer and participant to plumb the experience and to place it in context” (p. 11). Sequential interviews in a dialogic manner, which also entail self-disclosure on the part of the interviewer, can foster a sense of collaboration, a condition which many feminist researchers emphasize (Creswell, 1998, pp. 83-84). This is the approach adopted in this study. The approach was, moreover, informal and similar to interviews which are sometimes referred to as conversational interviews (Blackmore, 1999).

All the head teachers, except one, were interviewed twice¹, each session lasting 60-90 minutes. All the deputy heads were interviewed once, each interview lasting approximately one hour. The total number of interviews is 30, 21 with head teachers and nine with the deputies. Appendix 7 provides some details about the head teachers, their schools and the vignettes.

As mentioned above, rather than asking head teachers directly about their values, I approach them in a somewhat indirect way. Aware from my own experience that it is possible to hold values without consciously designating them as such, and conscious that immediate use of the word *values*, without a context being established beforehand, might have a confusing or inhibitory effect, I decided to approach the subject indirectly and allow the interviewees to name or reveal their values in other verbal contexts in the course of the interviews.

An individual faced with questions about her/his values needs to look inward and reflect. Sequential interviews and particularly narratives involving critical incidents, value conflicts and ethical dilemmas, are more likely to disclose a person’s value orientation than mere descriptions or lists of values.

The interviews are the primary data source in this study, with documents as a secondary source. The interview questions provide two types of information. First, head teachers,

¹ One of the head teachers was interviewed three times because both of us agreed that some of the issues in the second interview needed to be followed up further.

and their deputies, are asked if the school environment has changed in the past 5-10 years. If so, they are encouraged to elaborate on how and in what ways these changes may have impacted upon their role, both on its scope and nature. This first category of information helped to establish “the context of the participant’s experience” (Seidman, 1998, p. 11). It moreover sheds light on head teachers’ and deputies’ perceptions, and opinions of, the changes. The way they express themselves, and their rationale for, and against, these changes, also indicates what they value and if the values these changes reflect are to their liking. More importantly, these insights provide the context in which the value-related dilemmas illustrated in their vignettes is enshrined. As such, they provide the rationale and the ground for the second interview question, where the head teachers are asked if they are willing to share information about difficult decisions they have made in this time, especially in value-related dilemmas. The latter question thus offers participants the opportunity “to reconstruct their experience with the context in which it occurs” (Seidman, 1998, p. 11). All the interviewees were, moreover, asked if they believed that gender had an impact upon their behaviour and/or other’s behaviour and the expectations that others had regarding them. Appendix 8 provides an interview schedule for the head teachers.

In the preliminary phase of my research, the intention was to ask only the first question. This could have worked. Values would have been deduced from head teachers’ expressions as they talked about the recent re-structuring of schools. This approach might even have captured the gender dimension because the way head teachers argue for or against the dominant educational-leadership discourse would have indicated to what extent they favoured the current masculine leadership discourse (see Chapter 3).

As the research design evolved however, vignettes seemed more likely than general expressions and opinions to provide the necessary depth to uncover head teachers’ values. This kind of information is also likely to be more authentic, since the values are disclosed or expressed in accounts of real life experiences, rather than expressions of opinion about policy-making.

4.6.3 Documentary Data

Analysis of documents is a major method in social research (Bryman, 2004, Mason, 2002, Schwandt, (2007). As already mentioned, interviews are the primary method of inquiry in this study, placing documents as a secondary, though important, source to inform the research. Choosing to use documents means that I take an ontological

position which suggests that written words are, in themselves, meaningful elements of the social world. This also means that I take an epistemological position which suggests that texts can count as evidence of those ontological properties (Mason, 2002, pp. 106-107).

Schwandt (2007) refers to document analysis as “various procedures involved in analysing and interpreting data generated from the examination of documents and records relevant to a particular study” (p. 75). Examples of such documents are political and judicial reports, government documents, media accounts and school records.

The documents used in this research are mainly of two types. In the first category are documents which can be called school-based. These are documents about the schools themselves, produced by their staff and disseminated as either written or web publications. The most important of these are school prospectuses and handbooks (see Appendix 8). References to these types of documents are made in the findings chapters, numbers 5-8, where relevant documents from the schools offering such information are used to enhance understanding about the schools, their policies, vision and values. These documents also indicate to what degree the values expressed in head teachers’ narratives are reflected in the school publications, and vice versa.

In the second category are documents which are predominantly political: government documents, such as acts of parliament (see Appendix 9) and different policy texts from local authorities (see bibliography). The findings chapters also include references to those policy texts, made by head teachers and their deputies. Even though there are instances where the interviewees refer directly to particular policy documents (such as Asi does), most of them speak of them in general terms mainly to emphasize how they have contributed to changes in the school environment. To further explain and support such comments I have occasionally elaborated on them with reference to relevant documents. The documents in this second category not only help shed further light on interviewees’ comments but also play an important role in providing the contextual background for this research. These documents highlight the dominant educational discourse in Iceland and help shed light on the development of educational policy at both the governmental and municipal levels. The nature of these texts makes them particularly important for the examination and explanation of the educational context for this research, issues which are discussed mainly in Chapter 1, the introduction to the thesis.

In analysing the texts, I used a mixture of two approaches. First, as a way of categorizing the phenomenon under examination I applied a variation of content analysis. This is an approach which according to Bryman (2004, p. 181) seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic manner. While seeking to loosely categorize the issues I made no attempt to quantify the content in terms of counting words or subjects. Such an approach neither seemed to benefit the analysis of the text nor did it sit well within the qualitative approach applied in this study.

The units of document analysis can be of various kinds, such as words, significant actors, or subjects and themes (Bryman, 2004, p. 187). Once the unit of analysis has been chosen there are various ways of coding and, as mentioned above, it can be analysed through the counting of words or by searching for themes. Searching for themes and subjects is appropriate in 'qualitative content analysis', the second approach chosen here. This involves a search of themes and discourses in the materials being analysed (Bryman, 2004, pp.188, 392). The recurring themes and issues in head teachers' narratives were thus further illuminated by reference to the same issues in the documents.

All the head teachers provided some relevant documentary data. With only a few exceptions they mainly referred to their schools' web sites. Other helpful documents were policy documents from the municipality of Reykjavík, leaflets on the services offered in the school districts and the annual policy statements from the Local Education Authorities in the municipality of Reykjavík. Policy documents and statutory texts from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, such as *The Icelandic National Curriculum Guide*, were also important sources of information. As well as helping in the understanding of educational policy they provided me with the necessary practical information about numbers of staff and pupils and the size of schools. Last but not least, I used the school curricula handbooks and other information about each school as one way of triangulating the interview data thus increasing its validity. As already stated, documents of this last type are therefore, whenever relevant, addressed briefly in relation to each head teacher when they are introduced in the findings, in Chapters 5 to 8. A list of the most relevant documents is provided in Appendices 8 and 9.

4.6.4 Validity and Reliability

It has been noted that values and their underlying motivations may not be easily accessible through research. Careful selection of appropriate methods for inquiry is therefore important. As in any research, the question is whether the methods chosen, in this case semi-structured interviews, manage to investigate what the study is intended to investigate. As mentioned above, in this study, information was obtained mainly by semi-structured interviews.

While interviewing may not be the only way of obtaining valid information about participants' value orientations, a series of in-depth interviews does incorporate features that enhance validity (Seidman, 1998, p. 17). Such an approach places participants' comments in context, and if the interviews are conducted 1-3 weeks apart, as is the case in this study, it encourages them to account for idiosyncrasies and check for internal consistencies (Seidman 1998, p. 17). This approach should also enhance reliability of the study by increasing the consistency of the results. This draws attention to a second important question: whether similar conclusions would be drawn if the study were repeated by the same or a different researcher or if different methods were used. According to Schwandt (2001), an account is judged to be reliable if it is capable of being replicated by another inquirer. However, "opinion is divided among qualitative researchers over whether this criterion has any meaning whatsoever in judging the accuracy of fieldwork accounts" (p. 262).

The rationale for choosing semi-structured interviews and vignettes was provided above. Should this study be repeated, I would expect similar conclusions given that the research instruments were the same. This does not mean that similar findings could not be obtained by other methods. I would, for instance, expect similar conclusions if the head teachers were asked to keep a diary over a period of time and write down a few critical incidents. This was an option from the beginning of this study, and one I might have chosen in favour of interviews if head teachers from the rural areas had been included. Having the choice, interviews seemed the best method for this particular study. Finally, interviewees were either sent transcripts of the interviews and asked to reflect on them between sessions, or their first interviews were discussed before their second interview. This should enhance both validity and reliability.

4.6.5 Translation

This research was conducted in Iceland. The language of both researcher and researchees is Icelandic, which is the mother tongue of the majority of Icelanders (approximately 95%). In the interviews all questions were in Icelandic and all the interviewees spoke their native tongue. The interview dialogues and narratives were transcribed in Icelandic. At later stages I translated them into English.

While every measure was taken to be faithful to the original Icelandic texts, it needs to be acknowledged that some nuances and even aspects of meanings could be lost in translation. There are many reasons for this to happen. First, Iceland and England are two different countries with their own unique heritage and culture. Even if both nations are European, culturally and historically Iceland has more in common with the other Nordic countries than with England. Second, the two nations speak their own distinct language which has developed within their respective cultures. Again, in spite of their common linguistic origins as Germanic languages, Icelandic has a much closer resemblance to the Nordic languages than it has to English. Third, English is my third language, after Icelandic and Danish. Although I have spent considerable time in English-speaking countries, such as the United States and England, and completed a M.Ed. in Educational Management in English, my proficiency in English is obviously lower than in Icelandic. This will undoubtedly have had an impact on my translation of the interview transcripts and the reader is kindly asked to bear this in mind.

4.7 Data Analysis

In practice, there is little, if any, division between data analysis and interpretation, although technically they are different. Usually the process begins during data collection and then the processing continues formally after data collection has been completed (Watling, 2003, pp. 262-264). Interviews, which form the main data base of this study, leave the researcher with a large quantity of data which requires organisation; this is usually referred to as data analysis. This is the process of analysing and interpreting the data into patterns and categories or finding 'red threads' in the narratives of interviewers (Robson, 1993, p. 386). Documents serve as a secondary database in this study and observations during my visits and walks around the schools play a minor, but yet important, role.

In this study, the object under examination is head teacher's values and their influence on attitudes and actions. Two models of analysis, those of Begley (2004) and Hodgkinson (1991), were presented in Chapter 2 and will be further discussed in this chapter. Hodgkinson's value typology will enable me to classify values with reference to four basic motivational bases. Begley's 'administrative arenas' in an expanded version, including the concept *discourse*, will help to locate the sources of value conflicts in the broader environment of administration. The concept discourse will make it possible to use this adapted model as an analytical tool to analyse gendered educational discourses in head teacher's environment and to examine the interplay between leadership, values and gender.

After taking the interviews, I transcribed them, made notes and labelled them with dates and times. The first interviews were recorded and transcribed. I also made notes after the interviews in an attempt to capture the atmosphere, the physical surroundings, interview settings and body language, acknowledging that not even full transcripts of interviews can provide a complete picture (Powney and Wyatt, 1987, p. 148).

I began the process of analysing by listening to the tapes and making notes on whole interviews. I transcribed the first six interviews verbatim. In later interviews, I did not always find the time to transcribe them word by word between sessions. In these instances, I transcribed parts of the interviews accurately and left other parts out but referred to them with comments such as "A short discussion about...". All the second interviews started with a few minutes of reflection on what had been discussed in the previous session, what lay ahead and possible issues that either my interviewees or I felt needed to be addressed. At the time of my upgrade, I had decided, that in later interviews, I would follow the general rule of transcribing only the first interviews. By then I had come to the conclusion that the main themes had already been recognized.

When, after my first round of verbatim transcription, I went on with my analysis, I realized that the same or similar themes were emerging. As I continued listening to the taped interviews, I tested and retested my categories and themes while making a point of being open to new ones. This confirmed my previous notion that the main themes had already been recognized. At this point, I decided that rather than transcribing verbatim, I would shift to transcribing only those parts of the text that I considered relevant in terms of the already established themes, while trying to be alert to new ones. Having reached this stage, I continued my analysis, guided by Bogdan and Biklen's

(2003) approach, on the one hand, and Hodgkinson's and Begley's adapted model on the other.

The analysis of the transcribed interviews involved two stages, each involving several steps. I began by reading each interview, looking for regularities, patterns and topics covered. This led to the second step of writing down words and phrases which I felt represented these patterns on the margins of the transcripts. These words and phrases (themes) became my first tentative coding categories. Finally, I assigned the categories to the various units of data.

When each interview had been processed in this way, I took all the sections which were coded in a similar way and interpreted them as a whole. This procedure became the blueprint for all the other interviews. Through the analysing process, I tried to make sure the codes were related to the research questions and to concepts and themes (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003).

When I had finished this former part of the process, the analysis entered the second stage, that of applying the analytical models and concepts. Begley's adapted model on 'administrative arenas' thus allowed me to analyse head-teachers' values both when they expressed themselves in relation to change and when describing critical incidents. Head teachers' vignettes about critical incidents provide the richest data about their value orientations. Almost equally important were their narratives about the restructuring of schools and their impact on their role and on schooling in general. In some of these narratives, head teachers' values were just as prominent as they were in their vignettes.

After finishing the analysing procedure described above, I continued the interpretation of data which I had started at the end of each interview. This part of the research process involves interpretation of data by attaching meanings and significance to the analysis and looking for relationships and linkages and can be described as "the act of giving life to the categories, patterns, red threads that were detected in stage one of the analysis" (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003, pp. 160-65). In Chapters 5-8, I discuss the major findings and the themes that have emerged through the analysis and interpretation process. The two most important models which were used for analysing the data are discussed next. These are Begley's adapted model of 'administrative arenas' and Hodgkinson's value framework. Other models which are referred to in the analysis, such as that of Gewirtz (2002), were discussed in Chapter 2.

4.7.1 The Model: Self, Organization and Community-Culture

Begley's model, 'administrative arenas' was introduced in Chapter 2. The discussion provided a conceptual background for the application of the model and put it into the context of leadership in contemporary organizations such as schools. Begley's model portrays school leadership as a phenomenon involving at least seven arenas where leadership occurs. These are the arenas of *self*, *group*, *profession*, *organization*, *community*, *culture* and *the transcendental*. The following discussion is intended to highlight the applicability of this model as an analytical tool for the purpose of this particular study of head teachers.

As mentioned earlier, I have adapted this model in order to make it applicable to the present study. This involves the retention of some of the concepts in Begley's model, while others are excluded. Moreover, because the model, in its current form, does not allow for an analysis of gender, the concept *discourse* has been added to the model. This adapted model will allow for an examination of the interplay between the three dimensions of this study: leadership, values and gender. Below I explain my choices, in relation to the model, and provide a rationale for the concepts I use for the adapted model as well as those I do not use. This section also involves a discussion of the concept discourse, and its use as an analytical tool with the adapted model.

For the purpose of this study, I include only those concepts from Begley's model which I believe are directly relevant to it. The arena of *self* is necessary to shed light on the conflicts head teachers deal with on an individual level. This involves finding solutions which are acceptable to the other parties involved, as well as to the head teachers themselves. Some of the dilemmas head teachers share did not involve other people directly, but seemed to be primarily dealt with through an inner dialogue as the head teachers tried to choose between two or more equally difficult options. I also include the arena of *organization* because it is here that head teachers interact with teachers and other staff. According to Begley (2004, p. 9) this is the arena usually of most concern to academics and practitioners in the field of educational administration. Finally, I integrate the concepts *community-culture* to form one of three administrative arenas. This arena in the adapted version of the model refers both to the closer community of parents and the more distant societal culture of policy-makers and educational authorities.

Because the meaning of the concept *culture* varies greatly between academic fields and contexts, I give it some prominence in this presentation of the model. Culture has been used as a metaphor for organizations at least since the early 1980s. Opinions differ as to whether culture is something organizations ‘are’, or ‘have’ (Ogawa, 2005, p. 102). What has particular implications for this study, however, is that ‘the cultural metaphor’ revealed that organizations serve moral, as well as technical purposes (Ogawa, 2005, p. 104).

Culture can be examined from the macro level, referring to the societal culture, and the micro-level, the organizational culture, (the school culture in the present context) and the individual level (Walker, 2003). In this sense therefore, the concept cuts across all the other arenas in Begley’s model.

Culture, whether it is at the micro- or macro level, is not gender-neutral. Blackmore, (1998, xv) talks about two intersecting sets of cultural processes. The first exists at the macro-level of the wider gender order and of governments, as policy and curriculum are produced and circulated. The second set of processes exists at the micro gender-political level of the school itself. It is here that educational policy-making from the macro-environment comes to be interpreted for implementation. It is also here, at the micro level, that stakeholders react to policy interpretation and implementation efforts in various, and not necessarily compatible, ways. Finally, it is at the micro-level that values come to play through the school culture. This is mentioned here because of its relevance to this study which focuses on head teachers in the micro-environment of the schools and their role as interpreters of policy-making and policy documents which have been produced at the macro-level.

At both the micro and macro level of school there are competing and dominant discourses about schooling, education and leadership. These involve beliefs about the nature and role of education and also expectations about head teachers’ role, their looks, age, class, gender and other social constructs. As mentioned above, those conflicting interest of school stakeholders can result in value related dilemmas in which the head teacher has to to prioritize one task, or one issue, over another while neither of them seem desirable.

These three arenas, *self*, *organization* and *community- culture*, in conjunction with *discourse*, make up the adapted model I use for analysing head teachers’ narratives in this study. These clusters represent three administrative arenas where school stakeholders interact. Within these arenas, and between them, conflicts arise, are dealt

with, and eventually solved by head teachers. As Connell (2000) has pointed out, these clusters also correspond to the societal levels where gender identities are defined and come into existence through relations as people act: the individual, organizational, and cultural levels. The adapted model is presented in Figure 4.2., below.

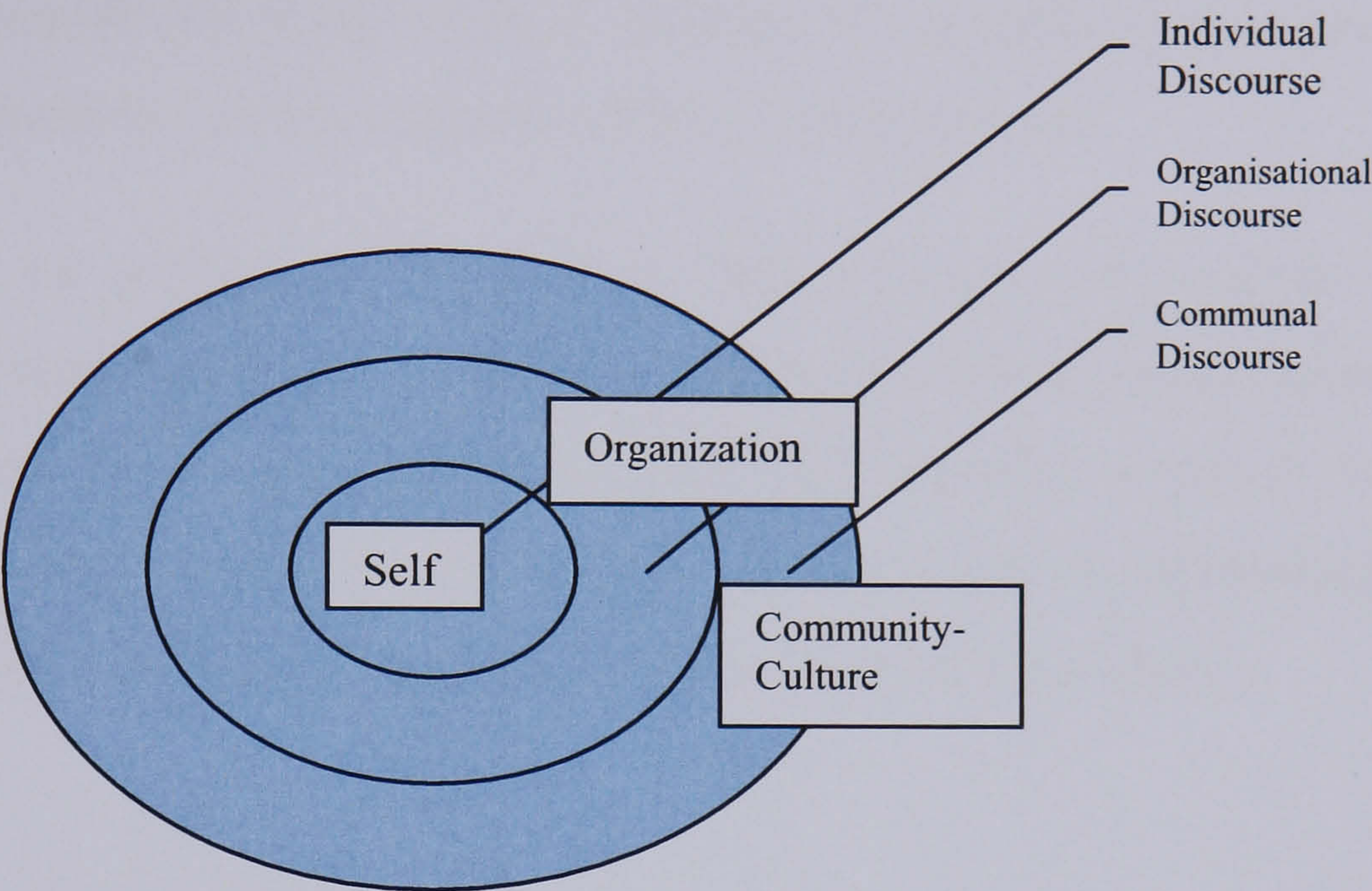


Figure 4.2. Administrative Arenas: Communal, Organizational and Individual Discourses

Profession and Transcendental

Because this study does not involve head teachers’ family or friends, I exclude the arena of the group. I also exclude the arena of *profession* which Begley describes as representing a more formal arena of administration. In my opinion, profession is an integrated part of both *self* and *organization*. I will therefore analyse matters which involve head teachers’ and stakeholders’ profession and professionalism in the light of these two arenas respectively. Finally, I do not include the seventh layer in the onion metaphor, which represents the notion of the *transcendental* which can be seen to represent faith, God, or spirituality (p. 10) and I am tacitly including it in the personal.

While actions at the other arenas, are observable and can be re-constructed on the bases of lived experiences, the same does not necessarily apply to the arena of the transcendental. For instance, the Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English, (1963) defines transcendental as “not based on experience or reason; going beyond human knowledge; that cannot be discovered or understood by practical experience, known by intuition”. Head teachers in this study were neither asked if they subscribed to a spiritual dimension in their everyday practice as head teachers, nor did they

volunteer any such information. Others, such as Woods (2007), have, however, made spiritual leadership their focus of study. Moreover, many contemporary leaders in Iceland, and elsewhere, frequently refer to the spiritual aspect of their life. For instance, in his book *Our endangered values*, (2006), Jimmy Carter, the former president of the United States, says: "...I must acknowledge that my own religious beliefs have been inextricably entwined with the political principles I have adopted". The reason for exclusion of the transcendental in this study is therefore not intended to undermine the importance of this dimension in the professional life of head teachers.

As mentioned above, the conflicts occur within and between often competing discourses at the various administrative arenas. Therefore the adapted model has been expanded so as to allow for an analysis of these discourses and their gendered nature as they are reflected in head teachers' narratives. The concept *discourse* and its relationship with values and gender will be further explored in the next section of the chapter.

Discourse

Begley's model of administrative arenas is helpful for examining and analysing leadership actions and how they relate to the values of individuals and groups. As mentioned above, in its current form, it does, however, not allow for an analysis of gender, yet has the potential for such an inclusion. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, Begley's model has been expanded to allow for an integration and examination of the various ways in which gender may impact on head teachers as they interact with stakeholders within the different administrative arenas. To this end I use the concept *discourse* as a bridge between the three concepts, leadership, values and gender. Combined with Begley's arenas of administration, discourse can serve as an analytical tool to examine the interplay between leadership, values and gender. The construct provides a means to understand processes of power and resistance that might occur in administrative arenas. Such an examination can therefore shed light on how individuals such as the head teachers in this study may be understood as constituted and identified through either dominant or subordinate discourse (Whitehead, 1999, p. 115).

The concept *discourse* derives from *post structuralism*, which is a term applied to a loosely connected set of ideas about meaning, power and identity. The emphasis in post structuralism is on the discourses which make up social institutions and cultural products such as educational policy documents. The concept comes from the French philosopher Michael Foucault, who describes it referring to "practices that

systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault 1977, p. 49). In simpler terms, discourse is concerned with the way in which meanings are made and the impact they have on our identities and actions. Foucault’s studies of discourse emphasize the ways in which knowledge influences what can be said, who has the right to speak and who is silenced. Discourse shapes the way people think and act and is seen to describe or define what is true and natural and it tends to be gendered. It can therefore prove difficult for individuals and groups to think or behave in a manner which is not compatible with the rules set out by the dominant discourse.

Every society produces its own truths which have such a regulatory and normalising function (McNay, 2004, p. 25). It is therefore through discourse that “meanings and people are made and through which power relations are maintained and changed” (Kenway and Wills with Blackmore and Rennie, 1998). In other words, according to post structuralist theories, *subjectivity* is produced by the discourse within which the subject is positioned. Subjectivity is another word derived from Foucault (1980) who believed that the self was unstable and located in different discourses. In this sense, an individual does not exist, which is why Foucault used the word subjectivity which means an individual within a discourse. A subjectivity refers to “conscious and unconscious thoughts, and emotions of individuals, her/his understanding of self and her/his relations with the external world” (Guðbjörnsdóttir, 2001, p. 12).

The subjectivity is, however, not completely determined by only one discourse, as this study shows. Subjectivity does have agency in the sense that she/he exerts some control over their destiny (Francis, 2002, p. 323) but only within the boundaries of ‘the regime of truth’. This is truth as defined by the dominant discourse in a particular culture and at a particular time. Therefore, the head teachers (as subjectivities) choose to position themselves in particular ways, within one discourse rather than within others available. At any one time there are, however, dominant discourses about education, educational leadership and gender behavior. Therefore, even if the head teachers do in this sense have a choice (have agency), mediating factors such as their gender and their headship identities may influence to what degree they feel free to ‘choose’. It can thus not be assumed that every head teacher has equal access to the necessary power to make a difference and have an impact in her/his headship roles.

Dominant discourses reflect the values which are most highly regarded by society. These change over time and those who take on headship may therefore face different

‘realities’ depending on the social categories they are seen to fit into and the given time period. Individuals adopt values from early age and throughout life, (see Chapter 3, sections 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 on gender identity). Knowledge of the motives behind head teachers’ values is important for understanding why they apply particular values to work-related dilemmas. Begley (2003) contends that the motivations behind values hold the key to understanding the nature and functions of values which shape attitudes, and potentially the subsequent action (pp. 7-8).

4.7.2 Hodgkinson’s Value Framework

We have, (although it will be denied by some philosophers) a moral sense, or sense of collective responsibility, a conscience, or perhaps, psychologically speaking “a superego”. At the personal level, this gives rise to a kind of internal conflict - two desirable warring within the bosom of a single self - as we feel on the one side the pulloff affect and on the other demands of the situation and what ought to be done (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 98).

When head teachers are guided by particular values in their decision making, it is because they are motivated to do so. As the quotation above suggests an individual, as a moral agent, is likely to experience difficulties, even dilemmas, when she/he is faced with conflicting demands or desires. In order to better understand the motivational bases of head teachers’ values, and their implications for the dilemmas they have faced, Hodgkinson’s value framework is applied in the analysis of data.

According to Hodgkinson (1991, p. 98), our motivations for actions are reflected in the values we hold. The motives shed light on either the conscious reasons or the unconscious drives, or both, which are sources of value. According to Hodgkinson (1991), we can only establish our values in one of four ways and they can serve as categories for our value judgements. They are the motivating force dimension behind the adoption of a particular value and hold the key to understanding the nature and functions of values which shape attitudes and potentially the subsequent action (Begley, 2003, p. 7). These categories can be used to classify values with reference to four basic motivational bases: personal preference or self-interest, an inclination towards consensus, concern for consequences and an inclination to respond to ethics or principles (Begley, 2003, pp. 7-8).

The four categories or ‘motivational bases’ store three distinct types of values. Type III values are ‘self-justifying,’ since they indicate individual’s preferences. Value type IIb shows an inclination towards ‘consensus’. Value type IIa shows a disposition towards a

concern for ‘consequences’ (Begley, 2003, pp. 7-8; Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 98). The grounds of values of Type IIa and IIb are social, because they depend upon a collective justification. They are deemed right if they conform to the will of the majority of people in a particular context. Finally, Type I values are “metaphysical” and have the common feature of not being “unverifiable by the techniques of science” (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 99). Moreover, they cannot be justified by logical argument.

Figure 4.3 below, shows a simplified version of Hodgkinson’s graphic presentation of the four categories or motivational bases (1978, p. 111; 1991, p. 97).

Four Motivational Bases	Value Type
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ethics/Principle Based</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - wisdom of the ages - established cultural norms - entrenched societal values, no rational justification required 	I
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Consequence Based</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - focus on desirable outcomes - can be rationally justified 	IIa
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Consensus Based</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conformity with group norms, peer pressure, expert opinion - can be rationally justified 	IIb
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Preferences/Self-interest</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - experience, memory, comfort - personal good, no rational justification required 	III

Figure 4.3 The Four Motivational Bases of Values

The model facilitates an understanding of what it is that motivates leaders to act in certain ways when confronted by value-related dilemmas and how their values relate to actions. In this model the “basic concept of value” is broken apart into its two components of ‘right’ and ‘good’ (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 97). Good is a matter of preference, and making a decision on the basis of what is good in this sense would therefore involve values of Type III (1991, p. 97). However, concern for consensus or consequences would, place a decision in either type IIa or IIb in Hodgkinson’s model.

Hodgkinson's categories of motivational bases will be used in the analysing of data to better understand the underlying motives for head teachers' decisions when faced with value-related dilemmas.

4.8 Vignettes and Examples

The head teachers differ in the way they approach their accounts. Most of them relate 1-3 holistic descriptions of events and experiences which I refer to as 'dilemmas' or 'vignettes'. Some of them offer 1-2 vignettes but decorate their narratives with examples in order to illuminate further the points they make. I refer to these as either 'mini-vignettes' or as 'examples'. The difference between these approaches will be highlighted further below.

Siggi is a good example of the former group of heads who offered a number of vignettes and Halli represents the latter who offered many examples rather than vignettes. Any probing on my behalf did not change the development of these interviews in this regard. It is plausible that those heads that chose to give a variety of examples, rather than relate one critical incident, did this as a way of emphasizing the gravity of an issue by giving many examples of incidents or a situation rather than discussing one event in detail.

There were 25 vignettes in all and 18 of them are included in the thesis. Vignettes from all the head teachers are discussed. I chose vignettes which I had drawn from head teachers' narratives and which I saw as being revealing and representative of head teachers' dilemmas. These dilemmas represent themes which not only came up in the vignettes but also in the various examples given by the head teachers. However, I also included vignettes which were not illustrative in this sense; rather, they were unusual, or even extraordinary. Examples of such vignettes are those of Siggi, on the rewarding aspect of being a teacher/head teacher, Gulla, on her reaction to the teacher's strike, and Gunna, about the little girl who wanted to talk. For instance, Siggi's vignette does not illustrate a dilemma; rather, it is a story about being able to make a difference in young people's lives. Gulla, on the other hand, reports how secure she was about her actions in a critical situation because she was convinced that she was doing the right thing. I attempted, in my choice of vignettes, to include a representative proportion of the whole number offered, both in terms of number and type. Moreover, the vignettes do not stand alone, since a number of examples are included as well. As mentioned earlier, a list of

the head teacher's vignettes which were included in the thesis is provided in Appendix 7.

Seven dilemmas were not included. In all, ten head teachers were interviewed. Some of them offered three-five dilemmas (Runa, Stina, Siggi) while others offered one. Therefore, three of the vignettes were excluded mainly because those who gave them (Runa, Stina and Siggi) already had three dilemmas each in the thesis. Also, I do not believe the additional dilemmas by these head teachers would have added new, or important, insights to the thesis because they were of a similar nature to those already related. Runa, for instance, offered a fourth dilemma relating to the implementation of catering services. She went through a difficult time because all her teachers were opposed to the idea and she and her senior management team did not think the school had the necessary facilities for this kind of provision. However, both parents and the municipality put great pressure on the school to comply and provide these services. Her dilemma is also too similar to that of Krista to be included in the thesis as well.

I excluded one dilemma by Halli even though this means that only one of his two dilemmas is discussed. This was necessary in order to preserve his and his school's anonymity. His second dilemma involved a member of his senior management team. This dilemma and its aftermath were highlighted in the media for weeks. In a small city like Reykjavík there would hardly be a professional in the schools who would not know whom this dilemma involved if they were to read about it.

I chose not to include a second dilemma by Asi because he was the most generous of the head teachers in terms of offering examples of the various issues that came up. Another reason for not including a second vignette by Asi was that it was very similar to that of Siggi's about his encounter with the superintendent in the city ("I felt bad for a whole year").

These are the main reasons behind my choices. Yet, I agree with Hall, (1999) who emphasized the problematic nature of leadership accounts and their interpretation which is why there is often "an unease" about which accounts to privilege (pp. 99-100).

As mentioned before, the head teachers were interviewed twice. Many of them chose to discuss the changes in the school environment in the first interview and then focus on value-related dilemmas in the second. Others did it the other way around. On rare occasions, head teachers discussed the changes and cited dilemmas in one and the same

interview. However they chose to order their narrative, they were expressing their views, beliefs and values. This twofold, yet flexible, structure of the interviews is the main reason for the two types of data in either the form of vignettes or examples. When discussing the environmental policy changes, head teachers rarely cited dilemmas, yet gave various examples in an attempt to ensure that the interviewer understood the meaning of their narratives. A second reason for the two types of data is head teachers different ways of expressing themselves. Some are not storytellers in the traditional sense; rather, they discuss, explain and give examples but do not provide stories with a clear storyline.

Many of the examples also cover issues that are different from those dealt with in the vignettes. For instance the examples given by each head teacher, often relate to many, or even all, the head teachers in the city and often most of the interviewees give examples that touch upon the same issue. Some examples of this will be given in chapter 5 where many of the head teachers cite the same issues as causing them concern and may perceive them as dilemmas, yet do not discuss one particular incident in the detailed manner which is typical of vignettes. Moreover, the structure of the examples is different from that of the vignettes, being both shorter and without a clear storyline. Unlike the vignettes, the examples may therefore not have a beginning, a middle and an end. Sometimes they start with the climax whereas in the vignettes the listener is often gradually led towards the climax of the story, which then continues towards a discussion of the aftermath of the incident and the experience. In these cases, the head teachers often look back and reflect on the dilemma and comment on it with hindsight. Those who preferred examples to stories often gave two-four examples, one after the other, to illustrate one and the same issue or to highlight a point they were making. A list of some, though not all, the examples is provided in Appendix 10.

What follows therefore are head teachers' accounts of value-related issues they have dealt with in post. Some of them are in the form of vignettes. Others are presented in the form of examples rather than vignettes.

All the data are, however, rich. Therefore, in varying detail, it is analysed with the same analytical tools, the adapted version of Begley's administrative arenas (2004) and Hodgkinson's (1978, 1991) value framework. Together, the vignettes and the numerous examples head teachers give, shed light on their experiences and provide rich data on their value orientation and value-related conflicts.

Each of the four following chapters is divided into sections under sub-headings where a theme is examined and discussed, either in the light of examples and quotations from the participants, or from vignettes. The vignettes and examples involve critical incidents or value related dilemma for the head teachers concerned. Each chapter ends with a short summary. The collective findings are discussed in detail in Chapter 9.

The findings are presented in the following four chapters. The research questions are addressed and four main themes are presented, one in each chapter. Findings relating to the first research questions (How are values reflected in their narratives? How do values influence their actions?) are examined in Chapter 5. Question No. 1 is further addressed in Chapter 6, where head teachers cite professional experiences which have touched them in a more personal manner than others. Head teachers' reactions and the motives behind their actions are examined in Chapter 7 (addressing question No. 2, How do they respond to value conflicts and why?). Finally, the third research question, on head teachers perceptions of the impact of gender on headship, is examined in Chapter 8. Particular attention is paid to the women who have been entering headship as successors of men in a time of educational restructuring.

4.9 Summary

In this chapter, I have tried to lay out the manner in which I have conducted this study into the values of Icelandic head teachers. I have stated my position in relation to knowledge and research and described the theoretical framework and methodology and methods based on this position and framework. I have discussed important ethical considerations and issues of validity and reliability. I have also discussed areas where adjustments were required. e. g. in relation to Begley's model of administrative arenas, the inclusion of deputy heads and the verbatim transcription of interviews.

Chapter 5

Whose Policy? What Values? The Restructuring of Icelandic Schools. Values of Head Teachers

5.0 Introduction

To me the most powerful motivation for wanting to be a head teacher ... is the knowledge that you are in charge, to decide where you are headed, and this, admittedly, has more or less been taken away from you and thus you lose this motivating force to be a leader which is a considerable loss because you may have certain aspirations, things you want to accomplish

(On the loss of autonomy, Asi, a male head teacher in his early fifties).

In chapter 4 the number of interviews and interviewees, as well as the structure of the findings chapters, were outlined. While each chapter has a particular focus, a certain amount of overlapping of subjects is unavoidable.

In this chapter, head teachers express their views on the recent changes in the school environment. They also present their thoughts about the scope and nature of their role, and describe their beliefs and actions and justify them. Below, therefore, examples predominate over vignettes as head teachers express their views rather than relating dilemmas. Occasionally, the views of several head teachers, rather than one, are presented and discussed together in order to highlight a particular issue from different perspectives.

This chapter attempts to answer the first research question, on the ways head teachers' values are reflected in their narratives and the sub-question on the influence of values on their actions. In section 5.1 several head teachers and deputies comment on the recent changes. These comments set the stage for the value-related dilemmas and examples which follow in the next three chapters. Two head teachers, Asi and Siggi, describe how they have approached new policy initiatives in section 5.2. Their narratives are underpinned by examples from other head teachers and deputy heads. Among the most problematic new requirements schools have needed to meet are catering services. In many of the schools, deputy heads are responsible for their day-to-day operation. Several of the deputy heads and some head teachers share their views on the implications of these services for their role and the organizational structure of the school in section 5.3. The last head teacher to tell a story in this first findings chapter is Gunna,

whose vignette sheds light on how she prioritizes work. Finally, in section 5.5, an attempt is made to explore head teachers' narratives about the recent changes in the environment of schools and the values which they reflect.

5.1 “Wait a Minute! When did we say this”?

The way participants talk about, explain and describe their actions often sheds light on the values on which they base their everyday practice. This applies to almost every example and quotation in this chapter. However, even if all the head teachers repeatedly referred to values in their narratives, they rarely used the term ‘value’. The two exceptions to the rule are Asi and Siggi, but for different reasons. Siggi is preparing a programme on values in the school where he has recently taken on headship, while Asi has an academic background in philosophy. Yet, it is in the rationale head teachers give for their decisions and consequent actions when faced with, what they have perceived as value-related dilemmas, that their values and the impact of values on action may become most apparent.

‘Monumental’, ‘revolutionary’, ‘indescribable’, are but a few of the exclamations given by Icelandic head teachers when they describe the change that has taken place in their roles in recent years. Stina traces the major changes fourteen years back, to 1991, when the responsibility for budgeting and allocation of money and resources was transferred from educational authorities to the schools. This, in her opinion, represented a “revolutionary change in head teachers’ role ... and this has, of course, multiplied the scope of my job”.

Haddi, who has only been in post for five years, admits that “when you start in this job it almost swallows you but then of course you find ways...”. In his opinion, the educational authorities have a tendency to pile [head teachers’] tasks up, one on top of another, ...and points out that under these circumstances head teachers need to remind themselves that it is indeed they who are in charge of the schools. “I sometimes have the feeling that the city hall is right here in my office”. In his opinion it is therefore “extremely important for head teachers ...to make their order of priorities clear”.

Binna, Stina’s deputy describes a similar feeling to that of Haddi, as if the job is controlling her rather than the other way around. Binna is an experienced teacher and administrator but “this winter I suddenly got the feeling that I was some kind of

universal saviour. Day out and day in I was here trying to provide ‘first aid’ while my interest lies all in teaching and learning. This is almost like a busy train station”.

In Krista’s opinion, the major changes in the past years involved added responsibility, such as finances and new services like hot meals and day care, as well as newly required competencies like information technology. These changes often caused concerns of a practical nature, such as finding appropriate venues for catering services or learning how to operate the newest software for budget planning. Sometimes they elicited strong convictions about what kind of place a school is and consequently the kind of services such an institution should provide. Other concerns are the scope of the job, with the addition of new duties and added responsibility, prompting Krista to point out that “there has been no end to new duties”. Many of these added responsibilities are quite time-consuming. For instance, catering services are demanding to the extent that the majority of interviewees mention them as a particularly big and difficult project. Baddi, Runa’s deputy, remarks that it seems as if the educational authorities do not quite understand “that a school is a school, and therefore not just like any other institution” and that “time spent on improving the teaching, ... is number one priority”. His views are similar to those of Asi (see Chapter 7) who did not want to increase teachers’ contact time so as not to distract them from their teaching. Similarly, Baddi does not find it necessary for teachers to participate in many issues which he sees as primarily related to the “institution,” as he puts it. These, and similar remarks, suggest that in many instances these new chores take up time which used to be devoted to other pressing or important issues. At least some of the respondents believed these “important issues” were more aligned to their idea of the school’s role. Regardless of their views, head teachers and deputies alike appear to agree that the demands of new services have been relentless. This, they say, is done under the auspices of autonomy which some of the head teachers refer to as ‘pseudo-autonomy’, where target setting is followed by tight monitoring, leaving little space for individual leadership manoeuvres. Moreover, many of the head teachers seem to find themselves working in an environment of contradictory messages concerning their role and that of their school. This offers a fruitful ground for value-related conflicts and dilemmas.

An issue which often surfaced in the interviews was the origin, development and ownership of the ideas behind these changes. Many of the head teachers also mentioned, and objected to, the manner in which they had been presented and disseminated by the local authorities. Officially these changes are seen to represent the collective view of

educational authorities and school leaders. Many of the head teachers, however, object to this interpretation of their involvement in policy making. Referring to the city's annual policy document, Siggi describes the process in the following manner:

...and then head teachers attend meetings with the superintendent to develop a policy which draws on their discussion and this is presented as the city's policy but rests undoubtedly mainly on the values of the superintendent suddenly, when the policy is published, there were head teachers who said, "wait a minute, when did we say this"?

Siggi admits that this is the way group work is often carried out, yet this has caused a lot of distress within the group, even among those heads who were generally in favour of the superintendent's work. Because of this approach to the implementation of change, Siggi thinks many people feel as if the policy has been imposed on them from above, and this becomes their rationale for opposing it. Asi points out that even if head teachers, as a group, took part in the original discussion, there are, or at least were, all kinds of things in the document that did not come from them. Even those like Asi, who in the end, agreed with the policy, and the ideology behind it, were upset by the way it was presented by the superintendency, as if it was a document based on a democratic participation and contribution of head teachers, whereas the reality was different.

The introductory section above highlights the values which compete for recognition in the various administrative levels of the school. Many of them concern teaching and leading as opposed to managing, democratic work procedures as opposed to centralizing tendencies, and professional autonomy as opposed to monitoring. These issues will reappear and be addressed throughout the chapter.

The next section offers further examples of the various ways in which head teachers and deputies responded to situations and events which, in their opinion, followed the restructuring of education in Iceland.

5.2 "Every School Shall Adopt". The Trilogy of Target Setting, Monitoring, Autonomy

This is the reality of our times. On one hand this extensive planning which is published annually and then on the other hand you are constantly filling out all kinds of check-lists which are then used to compare what you are doing with the work of your colleagues?

(Asi, a male head teacher in his early fifties).

A recurrent theme in all the head teachers' narratives is the extensive and detailed target-setting, followed by close monitoring, at the school level, but even more by the

city authorities. This is done mostly through surveys and check-lists which are sent to school personnel, head teachers or parents. Gewirtz (2002, p. 32) argues that for the new manager in education, good management involves the smooth and efficient implementation of aims set outside the school, within constraints also set outside the school. An example given by Siggi (below), shows that he is quite skilful in implementing such targets without causing opposition in his school. However, other Icelandic head teachers approach this environment in various ways. Not all of them welcome it. At times, some of them have openly opposed it and, as a result, they have experienced friction in their relations with the authorities. Asi falls into the latter group. In spite of being in support of the overall educational policies of the city, he finds the detailed target-setting and indifference to school cultures unacceptable. He has stated openly that there is no autonomy left and followed it up by asking “Where is the professional autonomy, what does it mean?” In his opinion, an autonomous head teacher should at least be in a position to prioritize, which is not the case, and he says: “I find this sad, because working in this kind of reality is not rewarding”.

Like most of the head teachers, Asi uses the phrase “the way things were” on various occasions. With nostalgia, he looks back to “the way things were” when schools were allowed, and expected, to take the initiative and launch new projects and school development programmes. Now, everything is tied down in goals: three-year goals, goals for the school district and year goals for every school.

...what we have found it difficult to accept is how the LEA (Local Education Authorities) has completely taken over any policy initiative and the extremely detailed nature of the LEA’s annual policy statement and the city heads have been trying to stop or exclude certain expressions such as “every school should” and “every teacher must”.

Runa, who shares Asi’s view, mentions that there are many traditions in her school which she wishes to uphold but points out that “there were things that we were supposed to be doing collectively but they didn’t necessarily fit in all the schools”. In a discussion with her colleagues she remembers that “we were doubtful as to whether there is any autonomy to speak of”. In spite of head teachers’ collective opposition to the approach, “it was not until 3 years ago that we [the head teachers] began to state our opposition to these methods of working openly”.

Thor, one of the deputies, shares Runa’s view when he comments on the so-called autonomy of schools: “I think you could say that this is autonomy under heavy

monitoring”. The only indication of financial autonomy that he recalls is the freedom to spend money saved within one category on another, what Krista calls “taking money from myself and giving it back to myself”.

Asi refers to the LEA (Local Education Authorities) annual policy statements, which state that every school shall adopt a particular approach to deal with disciplinary problems in the school. This he has refused to do because the staff have spent years on developing a system “which is at least as good as the one advocated by the LEA”. Moreover, he knows that the Law on Compulsory School only gives the education council the right to make suggestions but does not give it “the kind of dictatorial powers which it has taken”. Other examples of this kind of determination can be found elsewhere in Asi’s narrative.

When it comes to applying new policies or work procedure universally in all the schools, Jona, one of the deputies, believes the school administrators have to choose or refuse on the basis of the situation in their particular schools. Like Asi, her head teacher, therefore, decided not to implement a system and software to cover student related issues such as attendance and grades. His grounds were the same as those of Asi, that there already was a system in place which met their needs well.

Jona is also sceptical about the pressure she thinks many teachers feel, to comply with the emphasis on differentiated instruction which has recently been mandated by the city. Differentiated instruction was first introduced in 2001 (The 2004 Annual Educational Report of the City of Reykjavík, 2005, p. 37) and the progress of the implementation has since been monitored and documented annually. The plan for 2004 thus provided a list of nine steps that were to be taken in order to implement this approach to teaching and learning. The following year the status of every item on the list was assessed and made accessible in the plan for 2005. In Thura’s experience any developmental efforts to improve teaching take time and should be given the necessary time to evolve. She fears, that if this is not done, people will superficially behave as if they have adopted the new approaches, without believing in them, or implementing them, in order to be left in peace with their old ways of teaching.

Siggi has responded in a somewhat creative manner to the innovation issues of the municipality. When the city disseminated its annual policy document and sent it to the head teachers, Siggi read it and acknowledged that “there is nothing new under the sun”. He compared the targets with those guiding the work in his school and then put it aside

for the time being without discussing it with his staff. He later summoned everybody to a meeting in order to introduce the document.

I did not present it as the city's policy. I divided the teachers into groups and asked them to discuss what we wanted to do - what our present aims were. Then, when they had written them down, I copied them onto transparencies and asked: What in our aims is in opposition to those of the city?

He then presented the city's policy and together he and his staff came to the conclusion that their targets and the city's did, more or less, coincide. As Siggi phrased it, "There were no ideological conflicts We want what the city wants. It is just phrased differently and that was that and then I declared: "The city supports us...". Following up on this, Siggi says he disagrees with those who maintain that everything comes from above and sees it as just an excuse for not putting effort into the work. "I felt it was important to approach the matter in this manner and it really paid off".

The examples above show how two head teachers, Asi and Siggi, responded to new requirements put forward by the local education authorities. The first example involved a project which was intended to be uniformly applied to all the schools. Asi refused to implement this program on the grounds that a similar one was already in place in his school. His argument was that the programme in use had been developed within the school by his personnel, tried out, adapted to the particular needs of the school and was constantly being revised and improved. He therefore saw no reason to replace it with another one. This was accepted and to this day this arrangement has not been questioned by the authorities or other stakeholders.

The second example involved targets which had, similarly, been developed centrally and then sent to the schools as a part of the city's annual education policy statement. After reading the text, Siggi realized that it would not be difficult to find a way of aligning the targets of his school and those of the city. He consequently decided to introduce the document almost as pro forma matter. Rather than starting by introducing the external policy and then have his staff compare it with that of the school, he did it the other way around. Siggi is thus performing what Gewirtz calls "smooth and efficient implementation of aims set outside of the school". He may, however, not have been primarily concerned with conforming to requirements from above, but rather with finding a way of avoiding opposition while allowing people claim ownership of a policy they saw as being supportive of their work.

5.3 “I Have not Quite Mastered this New Reality”. The Case of the School Canteen

The restructuring of education has meant that schools are now responsible for various new services such as extra-curricular activities and hot meals. These services are provided by staff that are mostly unskilled and on minimum wages, yet are held responsible for services which are difficult and demanding. This very important group of staff is often the weakest link in the provision of services, with high absenteeism, causing ever more stress, followed by more absence and a high turnover rate. Unskilled staff now account for almost one-third of the total school personnel and because the turnover rate and absenteeism is higher in this group than among teachers, deputies like Thor often have to step in. (The 2005 Educational Policy Statement of the City of Reykjavík, see appendices 9-10). This has changed his job considerably and made his days even more unpredictable than before, “you never really know what your day will be like”.

Asi refers to these changes as “more staff management”, or should I say, “different” staff management, referring to new, and steeper structural hierarchies within the schools than before. The organizational structure in Icelandic schools was simple until 5-7 years ago with a head teacher and a deputy head and possibly 1-3 teachers with limited administrative duties. Now there are heads, one or two deputies and several middle managers. Not only has the number of staff risen, but the composition of the staff, with a growing number of support officers and school assistants, has changed. As Asi points out, this has not only meant more staff management but “different staff management”, because the new members of staff are mostly unskilled workers and, as he puts it, he has “not quite mastered this new reality”.

Apparently the provision of hot meals is the most problematic and time-consuming of the new services, and it is common for deputies to spend hours cruising the canteen area. Often they are also responsible for organizing the meals, dividing students into groups, hiring and firing staff and, last but not least, taking shifts for the staff who report ill. The head teachers themselves also spend substantial time in meetings over prevailing disputes between the catering staff. Many head teachers also mention the time they spend on informing parents about the management of these services and even the weekly menus. Baddi points out that there have been instances where parents have inquired into the bookkeeping of student canteens, at the superintendency, to see

whether, possibly, teachers were dining there without paying, i.e. eating at the parents' expense. Maggi, one of the deputies, refers to this, and other similar monitoring of parents, as like being under "the watchful eye of the parents". Stina particularly regrets not being able to take advantage of her secretary's professional skills any longer because her secretary is needed for other pressing jobs. "My secretary, for instance, is of much less use to me because she is always counting money...for the canteen and for this and that". She admits, however, that this comes as no news in the light of the development in society at large, where money has come to play such a prominent role. Head teachers are, after all, responsible for the financial aspect of the canteen, which is time-consuming and requires accuracy and skill. It does not come as a surprise that the head teachers do not take the financing of the canteen more lightly; half of them, Addi, Asi, Krista, Runa and Stina, discussed the serious implications a recent deficit had for the running of the school. Apparently the impact of the implementation of this new service has been considerable because Stina's deputy head, Binna thinks this "has brought about the biggest change in the role of head teachers".

5.4 "I Am the Children's Head Teacher"

I have always been of the opinion that being a teacher and a head teacher carries enormous and encompassing responsibility. I have always thought it was important that the children were happy and that it was our responsibility to tend to their social needs and everything that may influence their well being but the environment has not always been supportive of this view of mine

(The head teacher Gunna on the issue of head teacher's role).

Gunna became a head teacher in her present post in 1998 taking over from one of the few women heads in the city who retired after almost twenty years service. Previously Gunna had been a head teacher in a small rural school in the country and for a few years, leading up to her present post, in a coastal town with 300 students. She had also worked for a year in one of the ministries. She describes herself as a pedagogue and is pleased with the current educational policy of the municipality. In her opinion the pedagogical initiative taken by the municipality in relation to differentiated learning, has improved the pedagogical environment of children considerably. "I do not experience a centralizing tendency and I am pleased with the financial autonomy the schools have. I have been encouraged and I have been able to promote my interests".

Gunna compares her current situation as a head teacher, with that of the former position, both in the small, rural school, and in the town school where she experienced

indifference in school matters and general lack of ambition. Compared to her earlier headship experience, she finds that in her current situation she is much better equipped to provide her students with quality education and:

I am determined to look at the children through their hearts, and I listen to hear if their heartbeat is calm and regular I know my duties, I know there are many people who are not on guard [for the children] and the children must be able to rely on the school.

The following mini-vignette by Gunna, endorses her words about putting children's needs above those of others.

In the week preceding the first interview with Gunna, a teachers' meeting had been scheduled in the afternoon in relation to an in-service course on differentiated learning. It had been agreed that all the teachers would share information about their teaching practice and "of course I intended to be there". First, however, Gunna had another meeting with representatives of both the educational authorities and the health service. This meeting was expected to take about an hour but at the end of the meeting it was seen as essential that Gunna contacted a parent instantly to discuss the situation. All of a sudden she was faced with the choice of either attending to this individual parent on one hand and the group of teachers on the other "and I chose to stay where I was".

Then when that meeting was over and "I open the door there is this little, seven year old, girl standing outside even if she should have left the school premises an hour ago". As Gunna looks at the little girl, she realizes that she is already late for the in-service session which she finds it important to attend because "it is not every day that teachers discuss their teaching practice ...and now I had to choose again". Gunna knows that the little girl has just began her schooling and really needs to talk to her. "And what was I supposed to do, tell the little girl that I was busy, and that perhaps the door would be open later"? After a few moments hesitation Gunna decided to welcome the little girl into her office because "I am the children's head teacher, more than anything...", and this is what she did.

Gunna did not describe the incident above as a dilemma. It does however have all the characteristics of a dilemma where an individual needs to prioritize one issue over another, which seems to be equally important. What distinguishes this dilemma from the others discussed, is that it seems to have been dealt with and resolved within seconds or during the few moments it took Gunna to listen to the girl explain why she

needed to talk to her head teacher. The dilemma was on the level of the individual, the *self*, because Gunna was not discussing the issue with others, not negotiating or giving a rationale for her choice to anyone except herself. While many of the other dilemmas involved reaching a consensus among stakeholders, Gunna was merely having an inner dialogue with herself. Apparently it did not take her long to reach the decision of prioritizing the child and its need over those of her teaching staff. This decision is an expression of the care for the individual child and the responsibility she maintains to have as a head teacher, for the well being of every child. The way Gunna discusses her role as well as the vignette above, indicate that she positions herself within the discourse of pedagogy, teaching and learning. Her decision may also explain, at least partly, why she chose to discuss the pedagogical initiative of the municipality rather than reflect on other areas which have had an impact on her role and that of her school in recent years.

5.5 What Do They Really Mean? Further Probing Into Head Teachers' Narratives

Together, the examples presented above provide information and insights into the ways in which restructuring of education has changed the micro-environment of Icelandic schools. They also highlight how these various changes have consequently changed the scope and nature of head teachers' work. This has caused conflicts between head teachers and stakeholders in other administrative arenas and at times they have struggled with themselves before coming to terms with a decision or a solution.

Eight out of the ten head teachers in this study agree that the changes have been enormous. The two exceptions are Gulla and Gunna, but for different reasons. Gulla speaks as if she knows nothing else, and in a way this may be true. She is the youngest head teacher in the group and has only been in the present post for a few years. Although she was a head teacher before, this was in a small rural school where the changes would not have had the same impact as in the city. The situation she discusses is therefore not much different to what it was a few years back when she was hired. Gunna seems to view her current role as a city head teacher in light of her earlier post, also in an urban area. Rather than complain about negative aspects of the recent changes she highlights their positive aspects, particularly in relation to the pupils. She seems to be convinced that children's pedagogical environment has improved with these changes, and if there are downsides to them she does not discuss them.

On the surface, the conflict over new services is between the head teachers, who occupy the administrative arena of *self*, and the educational authorities, at the level of *community-culture*. The situation is, however, more complicated than it may appear, because parents are also deeply involved. It has been established that there are times when local authorities seem to deliberately involve parents as a way to put pressure on the schools to compete and to provide new services. At other times, parents approach head teachers, or the deputies directly, to ask about the services. Also, on the level of organization, the staff, both professional and unskilled, are involved. Thus, representatives of more than one group of stakeholders are involved at every level. Parents and authorities are active at the level of community-culture, and various groups of staff are voicing their concerns at the organizational level. As is often is the case, the head teacher is caught up between competing interests of various stakeholders and dealing with her/his own inner conflicts.

When the head teachers try to accommodate different views of stakeholders, they simultaneously, by necessity, have to look inward and reflect on their own values and the motivations behind them. Most of the head teachers talk with regret about the loss of professional autonomy. Asi is the one who expresses the strongest awareness of this loss. He is therefore likely to oppose ideas which he perceives as being imposed on him and his staff. When he decided to reject the new programme for disciplinary action, he is likely to have thought more about the collective wishes of his staff, or the consensus among them, than the consequences of implementing a new programme (Hodgkinson, 1978, 1991). Siggi, on the other hand, may have been concerned with the consequences of introducing a 'new' centrally-formulated educational policy to his staff at a time of turbulence. Such an approach might have caused distress among his staff and distracted them from their teaching and other professional activities.

Taken together, Asi, Runa and Siggi, and the other head teachers and deputies who have been quoted in this chapter value professional autonomy, democratic working procedures, quality of educational provisions, consensus of opinion in their schools and good working relations. At times, they have felt disempowered by the detailed target-setting and tight monitoring. To them, this also suggests that their professionalism and that of their staff is being questioned.

While parents may share schools' enthusiasm about quality teaching, they equally emphasize what they see as their right to have other services provided as well. The

educational authorities see it as their duty to secure this right, and encourage schools to do so quickly and uniformly and make sure they do so by constantly monitoring their progress.

Head teachers' narratives suggest that they perceive the school environment in Icelandas having many of the most defining elements of the 'New Managerialism' as describedby Gewirtz, (2002). These include heavy target-setting outside the schools and monitoring of practices and performance. Chapter two, Objectives, in the educational policy statement of the City of Reykjavík, 2005, involves a detailed list of long and short-term targets. It includes, for instance, a detailed Balanced Score Card for the next ten years, objectives for the next three years and objectives for each school district (pp. 9-21). Last but not least, each school is expected to produce its own short- and long-term targets with reference to all of the above, as well as to the 1995 Education Act and the National Curriculum Guide. Similarly, this environment also resembles what Wildy (2000) describes as "fast paced and uncertain" [where] "principals are expected to meet competing expectations about priorities, decision-making processes and school outcomes" (p. 173). The discussion in this chapter shows that education authorities, in a further effort to achieve conformity in services, sometimes introduce new work procedures to replace those which are already in place. It also shows how competition is encouraged through what many head teachers see as being methods of monitoring. Sometimes this is done overtly, such as when information on the schools and their services, is disseminated publicly. At other times competition is more subliminal, such as when parents are asked about services in a manner which some of the head teachers see as being almost manipulative.

These ideas, ideologies and work procedures, can be seen to reflect the hegemonic, masculine, managerial discourse of today (Blackmore, 1998, 1999; Connell, 1995, Mac an Ghail, 1994; Hatcher, 2004; Sinclair, 1999, Thrupp and Willmott, 2003), where technology, speed and competition is praised, an issue which resurfaces throughout this thesis in the chapters that follow. Head teachers like Asi and Siggi, seem to be quite skilful in finding ways of either adjusting the external demands to fit the needs of their particular schools or, if they see fit, arguing against the adoption of ideas or work procedures. Both of them thus act as strong managers with agency, individuals who can position themselves variously within or outside the dominant discourse. Even if their professional autonomy has been limited, they neither appear as helpless victims of public policy nor disempowered agents of change.

5.6 Summary

This chapter focused on recent changes in the school environment and the impact they have had on head teacher's roles. Particular attention was given to catering services, both because these were controversial from the beginning and apparently have continued to be a debated issue because of their various implications for the schools. The common element, in all the examples above, is the extensive and detailed target-setting, followed by heavy monitoring. This is done at both the macro-level, through legislature and the annual policy statement of the local education authorities, and at the micro-level by parents and other school stakeholders. Schools are moreover expected to put down detailed, short- and long term targets.

When head teachers' narratives about their past and current working environments are summed up and compared, parallels appear. Most of them complain about the loss of autonomy, lack of democracy, disempowerment and increased work load. Krista comments that "there has been no end to new duties ..." and all of them agree that the breadth of their role has grown considerably and the nature of their work has changed with the addition of new services and extra responsibility.

While Asi is the only head teacher who actually uses the word "managerial," he sums up the major changes mentioned by most, if not all, the head teachers when he explains that the changes are reflected in "this managerial reality, the staffing reality, the monitoring environment and then of course the extensiveness of the things you are required to do as a head teacher". It is in these narratives about the changing scope and nature of head teachers' work and the way they react that their values are reflected.

Chapter 6

Caring for Self. Caring for Others. The Restructuring of Icelandic Schools. Head Teachers' Values

6.0 Introduction

The first research question is further explored in this chapter. Here head teachers relate experiences which have touched them in a more personal manner than the others they talked about. In the first half of the chapter, three head teachers share vignettes which convey clearly what a long-lasting and deep impact disputes with stakeholders can have on both the personal and professional identity of head teachers. Because of their personal nature, these accounts reach deeper into the psyche of head teachers as they recall, reflect and relive emotions they went through at the time of the events. In the second half of the chapter the roles are reversed, as three head teachers discuss dilemmas that concern their own members of staff and how they have dealt with them. The total number of vignettes in this chapter is eight, presented by seven head teachers, four women and three men. One of the men, Siggi, contributed two vignettes (6.2 and 6.8). They are included because they offer a rare example of how one individual deals with a dilemma as a superior and as a subordinate.

With new authorities come not only new policies, ideologies and procedures, but also new communication patterns and relations. At times, these changes have extended beyond the relations between educational authorities and head teachers and into the relations between the head teachers. All the head teachers talked about the impact of target-setting and monitoring and the consequent lack of autonomy, on their work. Runa and Asi drew attention to how this ideology infiltrated the few private moments of “the community of head teachers in the city”. Comparing head teachers’ meetings five years ago and now (in the school year 2004-2005), Asi comments:

This was an organic community where people discussed and expressed their views. They could stand up and have an impact We used to have our area meetings where we would just enjoy a cup of coffee together and share experiences and problems in a relaxed atmosphere. Unfortunately, our superintendent has more or less put an end to this by requiring that we formally address various issues at the meetings Yes, what has transpired, in a nutshell, is that these meetings which we saw as our platform to share experiences and sorrows have now become a part of the city’s structural hierarchy.

Examples relating to the impact of policies and procedures on head teachers' working environment and everyday praxis have already been recounted. In addition to these, many of the head teachers reported critical incidents involving their relations with the superintendency in the city. Apparently some of them were serious and left scars which do not seem to have completely healed. This may be caused, at least partly, by a lack of closure, especially in incidents involving head teachers' relations with their superiors (Langlois, 2004, p. 86).

In their role as school managers and superiors, the head teachers seem to understand this and behave accordingly. In order to examine these two dimensions of head teachers' realities, the roles have been reversed in the latter half of the chapter, where head teachers relate dilemmas they have dealt with as heads of staff. The chapter opens with a vignette contributed by Runa in which she describes an incident between herself and the superintendent in her second year of headship.

6.1 “I Do not Think [the Superintendent] Ever Really Fully Understood the Gravity of the Matter”

Runa, a head teacher in her early sixties, and a former school teacher, became a head teacher in one of the oldest city schools in 1994, after having been a deputy head for eight or for over twenty years, i.e. for her entire teaching career. Runa went through quite a dramatic experience in her second year of headship (see Chapter 8). Subjects such as home economics and swimming had been taught in her school but had never received the hours prescribed for their grade levels. The rationale was, that with the classes divided in half, the pupils were receiving the more individualized teaching these subjects required. Soon after Runa took over, parents complained formally, and this ended with formal indictment in the spring. This was a serious blow, coming after a period during which Runa had experienced treatment which she perceived as bordering on aggression by the parents.

A few weeks later, when Runa was still trying to reconcile herself to the situation, the superintendent sent a letter to all the head teachers in the city in which they were informed about the indictment against Runa, stating her full name and that of her school. Apparently, the letter was intended to be an admonition and a warning to other head teachers who might still be using a similar arrangement of dividing classes into two groups. Like all the others, Runa received a copy, but even though the content

concerned her directly, she was not contacted, at any stage, before the letter was sent out. Runa was very upset by this course of action.

In spring that same year, when the superintendent summoned all the head teachers for the last collective meeting of the year, Runa decided to speak up and relate her side of the story “even though I could hardly find my voice ... I still become emotional when I think back to this time”. Runa found her voice, stepped forward and described what she had found to be unjust, undeserved and uncaring conduct on behalf of the superintendency. The fact that she had not been notified before the letter was sent was, from her point of view, disrespectful and showed an absolute lack of integrity. Following the meeting, when she shared her view on the incident with some of her colleagues and her superiors, she received an apology from the central office, “but I don’t think [the superintendent] ever really fully understood the gravity of the matter”.

Runa’s dilemma was experienced within an unusually circumscribed and restricted space. Her narrative does not suggest that, between the time when she spoke up at the meeting, and the sending of the letter by the superintendency, others were involved in it. This may have happened, but if it did, Runa did not find it significant enough to mention it in the interviews. This particular experience therefore stands clearly out from the others because almost its entire existence seems to be limited to what went on “inside a person’s head” (Cohen (1994, quoting Tuckman, 1972, p. 272). Yet, formally, the experience took place between the arena of *self* and *-community-culture*. The school representing the third arena, that of *organization*, only indirectly entered the stage of events as Runa contemplated the implications of the incident for the school, its staff and reputation.

When Hodgkinson’s value typology is applied to Runa’s experience and her decision to address the meeting, several options present themselves. The school in which she had worked for her entire adult years, an institution with an unblemished reputation, had, in her view been damaged, if not disgraced, by an indictment in her second year of headship. There is therefore no doubt that she was seriously concerned about the school’s reputation and wanted to state publicly that every measure would be taken to abide by the rule in the future. From this point of view, her decision was consequence-based, and was taken in order to prevent any further damage being done to the school. However, in the period leading up to the meeting, Runa says she felt a growing need to speak up for herself. This was not easy as it had to be done without casting a shadow on

the former head teacher and her staff who objected to the imposed changes. She was also thinking about her own integrity and reputation as a head teacher. From this perspective, her motive was based on self-interest.

When Runa was asked what it was exactly that upset her most in the chain of events she used words like *unjust, undeserved and uncaring, disrespect and lack of integrity*. These words reflect her expectations regarding the values she apparently had expected her superintendent would be guided by when she decided upon her course of action. This proved not to be the case, however, which upset Runa.

The main concern of the superintendency, however, was to fulfil its duties to parents who were claiming what they saw as their lawful right, to get the prescribed number of hours for their children. These values, of right and fulfilment of duties, are the main concern here and when an indictment is put forward against Runa, the superintendent seizes the opportunity and uses it as a general warning to all other head teachers in the city. All of this may have been ‘right’ but in Runa’s eyes it was far from being ‘just’. To publicly reveal her name and that of the school, to associate her professional identity and her position, and the school’s with unlawful activities without consulting her was, in her view, unacceptable. Runa, and the superintendent, thus represent two very different points of views which might, however, have been reconcilable, had Runa been contacted before the letter was sent out.

This event was quite a blow, in particular because it occurred so soon after another serious conflict Runa had encountered with the parent council in her school (see Chapter 8). In this instance she decided to speak her mind at a meeting with both her superiors and her colleagues. This is an act of power and suggests that Runa believed she could in some way have an impact on the situation. This may have helped her, but the interviews revealed that the incident had hurt her in such a way that years later she still had difficulty talking about it.

6.2 “I Felt Bad for a Whole Year”

At the age of 55, Siggi was a highly-experienced school administrator. Almost 25 years earlier, after 10 years of teaching in the city, he became a head teacher in a rural village school with ca. 200 pupils. He later relocated to the city and recently took on headship in one of the suburban city schools with almost 550 pupils and 90 members of staff. From the time he began his career as a head teacher Siggi was the highest authority

within the schools in which he has served. His position was quite different from that of Runa, for example, who was a deputy head for almost a decade, working side by side with an experienced male head. Siggi's interest in headship goes hand in hand with his enthusiasm about pedagogy and curriculum development, issues that have been his main interest since his early years of teaching.

Before taking on his present headship, Siggi was a head teacher in a smaller suburban city school which had been under construction for a number of years. The old part was being repaired and gradually, as the number of pupils grew, new wings were added to the older ones. This called for cooperation with a number of people such as architects, builders, financial representatives, city planners, various communal bodies and the like. From the very beginning, progress was slow and the work behind schedule. At the beginning of every school year, frustrated teachers, irritated parents and disappointed children learned that their expectations about the new school buildings would not be met. All this had cost Siggi enormous time and effort in terms of co-ordination, meetings, reconciling of interests and consoling the various stakeholders.

A few years back, early in the school year, after one more 'hiccupping' school start, Siggi had requested a meeting with the superintendent to inquire into the latest developments. He explains that, by then, he and his staff had become disappointed and distressed as a result of the continuing delays and postponements. At that point, his main interest was to learn when to expect the necessary furniture and standard equipment for the new classrooms. Even though the superintendent was not the highest financial authority in this regard, Siggi knew that without her unwavering support, nothing would happen. When Siggi showed up for the meeting he says he realized, much to his surprise, that the superintendent was not alone, but was accompanied by two other, high-ranking members of the staff of the educational authority. When the meeting formally started, he came in for a second unpleasant surprise when it became apparent that the agenda was quite different from the one he had requested. Instead of discussing the issues he had asked for, the superintendent wanted Siggi's consent to a considerable reduction of expenses as compared with the original estimate. The figure they suggested had apparently been agreed upon before the meeting by the representatives from the building committee and the manager of financial affairs who accompanied the superintendent at the meeting. When Siggi aired his surprise and asked what this was all about, he sensed that the superintendent was annoyed. The next thing he knew is that he had become the focus of attention and was being told that complaints

had been made about him. It was alleged that he had been difficult and overbearing to the point of being rude towards members of the building committee.

These changes in both the organization of the meeting and its content put power at the centre of the chain of events. It is clear from Siggi's narrative that he felt disempowered in these circumstances. However powerful he may have felt as a head teacher in his own school, it did not help at a meeting where he was faced with the highest educational authority, in the largest municipality of the country, buffered by two of the highest officials in the city. In this case the superior was a powerful woman who brought two high-ranking male experts with her to the meeting. Because Siggi was not alerted to this change beforehand, he was mentally unprepared and without concrete information which might have supported his cause at the meeting. In terms of power his situation was weak, something he became instantly aware of.

Reflecting on the episode Siggi says that he decided instantly not to say anything "I said to myself, now you shut up," which is what he did. After a moment's silence he faced the superintendent and asked her directly if she agreed with these complaints. When she acknowledged that she did, Siggi reminded her that this was a different message from the one he got from her in her annual staff interviews with head teachers. "Yes, I should probably have told you earlier," was the answer, and these were the final words spoken at this meeting.

Siggi's narrative involves mainly the two arenas of *self* and one particular embodiment of the *community- culture*, in the form of the the superintendent and the other superiors. Parents, students and staff are at the edge of the narrative and they are not involved directly in his dilemma. All these stakeholders are, however, one of the reasons for his worries, because he had to act as a mediator between them and his superiors. Siggi's meeting with the superintendent, and her assistants, was not only set up differently from what he expected, with three officials instead of one, and an unknown agenda, but also without any prior knowledge of his. For instance, had Siggi known, he might have wished to be accompanied to the meeting by his deputy or a member of his senior management team.

In Siggi's opinion, he had always been loyal and honest with his superiors. He had, for instance, never put pressure on the education authorities by involving the media in the school's affairs, although others, such as parents, did. He therefore neither expected nor thought that he deserved this kind of treatment from them. In the light of this

experience, the meeting was therefore an even greater blow to Siggi, and caused him to lose faith in the integrity of his superior.

This was only the first chapter in an evolving story; back in his school, the staff had been waiting for news for a long time. Now Siggi had to find a way of telling them that alas, once again, they would not be getting what they had been promised, and on the contrary, they would be getting something much less. When he finally met the staff he only told them a fraction of what had transpired at the meeting because “I never saw the point in making my staff angry at our superiors, even if it would have been really easy for me to do that. I did not think it would benefit the school...”.

It is clear that Siggi did not want to keep up a fight with his superiors. He therefore decided, in a way he describes as almost being instinctive, not to answer back at the meeting. Here Siggi seems to have been motivated by his concern for the consequences of the meeting. This, decision, not to speak up or answer back, may, however, be the main reason for the fact that it took him a long time to come to terms with what had happened and how he felt he had been treated. Apparently, Siggi was also preoccupied with upholding the air of consensus within his school and tried to maintain peace by not alerting the staff to anything unusual. He appealed to the staff to stick together and do whatever they could to make the best of the situation a little longer. Consensus within the school would ensure a harmonious working atmosphere for teaching and learning. To this end he made sure his staff did not waste their energy being angry or irritated at their superiors. In his opinion, such a state of affairs may result in teaching and learning receiving secondary attention, and avoiding such a situation remained his main interest. When Siggi was asked what it was mainly that he found most difficult to accept, he said:

It was the unfairness, more than anything it was the unfairness I did not feel I deserved this. I believed that throughout this long process of school construction I had been honest and put an effort into looking for solutions and compromises at all the countless meetings.

The values of honesty, fairness, integrity and loyalty keep surfacing in Siggi's accounts. They are at the forefront here, when Siggi is discussing what he perceived as a serious breach of trust between himself and his superintendent. They appear again, in a similar manner, when he refers to other dilemmas or examples, some of which are discussed in this thesis. When Siggi described the aftermath he said “Every time I thought about this I became upset...”.

I felt bad for a whole year. Every time when something triggered my memory about this meeting, I felt bad, much worse than I felt while I was at the meeting. I blocked all emotions while I was at the meeting.

However, it was not until after the meeting, when Siggi had talked about the events with a close friend, who became angry on his behalf, that he allowed his own feelings out and faced that “I had in fact been violated... . I had not intended to let this [experience] get to me”.

Apparently, Siggi put his pedagogical role as a leader at the forefront. This position, more than anything, was probably crucial when he decided not to speak up at the meeting or take the matter up again with the superintendent. This was also the main reason for his decision for not sharing the incident with his staff. Above all, he did not want to do anything that could potentially harm the working relations in the school and the emphasis on the instruction and progress in teaching and learning. Being publicly at odds with his superiors or upsetting his staff would not serve this purpose. Siggi situated himself within the discourse of professionalism and pedagogy, or the “public service ethos” (Gewirtz, 2002) and did not lose sight of this vision throughout the course of events. In this particular instance, such a stance does not leave Siggi many options to come to terms with the situation psychologically. Like Runa, above, he had neither the power nor agency to react in a creative way within the narrow confinement of the situation.

6.3 “This Affected us Deeply”

While most of the incidents described by the interviewees occurred within the past 5-10 years, the following vignette, by Krista, involves an incident which occurred almost 20 years ago. It is discussed here because of its relevance to this study on leadership, values and gender and because Krista herself saw it as by far the most serious one in her whole career.

Krista is in her late sixties and the oldest of the head teachers in this study. She retired soon after the interviews took place after nearly 25 years in headship. When Krista took on headship in the early 1980s she took over from a newly-retired man who had headed the school for over 30 years. The school was in one of the oldest parts of the city, and her pupils came from homes of educated, upper-middle-class parents. Krista had no prior experience as a school administrator but had been a highly successful teacher of elementary school children in a new, experimental school, for almost a decade. Her

intention was to introduce the ideology of the open-plan school and to that end she presented her ideas at her first meeting with parents and staff. Her education and experience told her that changes were a delicate matter. This was particularly true in a school area which was accustomed to a school which was seen as providing traditional quality education. Krista therefore decided to implement the changes slowly and step by step. This meant that children who were already in the school would continue and finish their education within the same pedagogical environment. New children, the six-year-olds, however, would enter the new system.

Even though these innovations were controversial among parents from the beginning, the school gradually established itself as one of the most pedagogically progressive schools in the city. All these years, however, there were parents who objected to what they saw as too much freedom, a too loosely-laid-out curriculum and the lack of formal examinations. This annoyance culminated when Krista had been in post for approximately five years. At that time a popular, well-known public figure, and a father of a young boy in the school, encouraged parents to attend a meeting to hear him out. At the meeting he turned against the teachers and the head teacher, in what they perceived as a very aggressive manner, for their work. Eventually the father removed his son from the school and enrolled him elsewhere. Earlier, he had followed his actions up by asking a journalist to write a cover story in one of the afternoon papers. The story was accompanied by photos taken by a professional photographer from the newspaper that “shot the photos in such a way as to make everything look twisted and distorted in order to emphasize that what our work amounted to was nothing but total chaos”. Krista recalls that photos were mainly taken when the children were leaving their work stations, rather than when at task, to suggest that they were constantly on the move rather than focused on their work. This, in Krista’s opinion, gave a distorted picture of the work, and:

This affected us deeply; it had an unbelievable impact on us [the staff] Just recently one of the oldest teachers mentioned that this had left us with a deep wound. Now, 20 years later, it gives me goose bumps to think about it.

In the aftermath of these incidents, Krista kept a low profile. She encouraged her people to continue their good work, while doing her best to uphold a good working morale in the school. This was not easy, though, and the most difficult part was “not being able to answer back”. When Krista was asked why, she said: “Our voices were not strong enough, not professional enough”. Apparently, the situation was the same with parents,

because “those of the parents who were on our side were not strong enough to stand up [against the accusations].” As an afterthought, however, Krista commented: “But I must give my teachers credit for standing by me”.

Krista’s actions during the time of accusations and through the media publicity storm seem to have been driven primarily by her concern for the possible consequences. She came to the conclusion that it would best serve the interest of the school not to participate in a public debate about it. Her words about finding it difficult not doing so suggest, however, that she would have liked to be able to, but lacked the strength and the courage.

Formally and publicly, this dilemma involved only the head teacher, Krista, and one parent, or the arenas of *self* and *community-culture*. Representatives of other stakeholders were not directly involved in the conflict. Under the surface, however, there were many agents, such as the group of parents who supported the father in question and the media, the journalist, photographer and their editorial board. The *community-culture* arena was thus more involved than it might seem to have been at first glance. The arena which probably suffered the most serious blow, that of the *organization*, was, strictly speaking, not involved. It is here, however, that the heart of schooling lies, it is here where pedagogy is acted out, teaching is delivered and relations between staff and members of the community occur. In this sense, all the arenas were involved in one way or another.

Krista’s values of care and equality, and her focus on the child and its right to an education which fits its needs, permeate all her narrative. Her view on curriculum and pedagogy is closely linked to her belief in the right of everyone to equal access to education and the primary role of schools as places of teaching and learning. In all the discussion about re-structuring of schools, with added duties and new roles, she seems to have been on guard to make sure that nobody would lose sight of this primary role and responsibility. She thus situates herself within the professional and pedagogical discourse and remains there, regardless of the developments in the macro-environment. This becomes even more apparent when she expresses her views on new roles such as those of providing hot meals in the schools (see Chapter 7).

The father, and his supporters, however, entered the stage in the early days of a discourse which has sometimes been called “power to the parents”. At the same time he was a spokesman of the emerging values of the market: efficiency, effectiveness and

last but not least competition. Of all the things he was dissatisfied with in the school, the worst was the fact that students did not go through formal exams and thus did not receive traditional marks. His son's grades could therefore not be compared to those of other pupils, and this he found unacceptable.

It is obvious from the way Krista talks about the dilemma that she and her staff felt vulnerable and disempowered. In this scenario she did not think she had any control over the course of events. She did not see herself as having a voice or possessing the necessary means to change anything. In this sense, Krista was without the agency she would have liked to possess in order to take action. In the light of this ordeal in the first five years of her headship, it might have been expected that Krista would continue to keep a low profile, but she did not. On the contrary, as other examples from Krista in this thesis clearly show.

6.4 “I Feel that I Am Abusing my Staff by Making them Put up with Something which is Unacceptable.” The Inclusion of Disturbed Children

The dilemmas above shed light on some of the conflicts head teachers have had in the past years with school stakeholders, mainly parents and local education authorities. Below, the roles are reversed, as head teachers relate experiences of dilemmas that concern their own members of staff and how they have dealt with them. One of the head teachers, Siggi presents his view on both these dimensions. Below is a short vignette by Stina, preceded by a short introduction, drawing on Addi's experience, which helps to highlight this issue.

Addi described a situation in his school, with “difficult parents who just screamed at me and told me I was incompetent.” He portrayed this as something he had never experienced earlier in his career, neither the kind of dispute nor the degree of fury. The parents in question had a son who was extremely violent and incidents involving his misbehaviour were constantly being reported to him. These included the boy being caught running around, threatening people with scissors. Addi had spent considerable time trying to find a suitable solution to the boy's problems within the health system. In the end, his search was successful but by this time the situation had seriously disrupted the teaching and general working atmosphere in the school for months. All along, the boy's parents rejected any notion that their son was seriously ill. In the process they

threatened to take action such as bringing the matter to the attention of the media. Addi admitted that the whole situation was very trying and caused a lot of anxiety. Stina, however, had yet to solve a similar problem in her school.

Before examining Stina's narrative, however, it may be helpful to look at the legal environment of home-school relations which has changed considerably in the past 10-15 years. Parents' councils were established by law with the 1995 Education Act. Moreover, one of the five three-year targets introduced in the city's policy statement for 2005 addresses the influence of parents on schools and schooling. By 2005, parents' councils were expected to have become established enough in city schools "to enable them to have real impact on policy making and the planning of schooling". Head teachers are expected to have a minimum of ten formally-documented meetings with the councils" (p. 15). Even if the formal authority of parents has been strengthened in recent years, the quality of home-school relations may not have improved as a result. Some of the narratives in this thesis suggest that head teachers sometimes feel forced up against the wall by parents with the support of the superintendency. Apparently further work is necessary to make school personnel and parents into necessary allies in securing the best education for children.

Stina had a long career as a successful school teacher in the school where she took over from a male head teacher who had been in post for over 20 years. She had no prior experience as a deputy head and went straight from teaching into headship. Stina's school was known for its emphasis on high-quality teaching, an emphasis she identified with.

One of Stina's students was a seriously mentally disturbed boy who had "held the school more or less hostage this winter and nothing can be done, or so it is said". The answer she received from authorities is that the boy was to be in the school; this was "a school matter". In her opinion, she and her staff had tried "just about everything humanly possible to get assistance," but without success. There were, moreover, financial concerns, because the quota was limited and many children were in need of extra services. The parents were determined to keep the child in the school. Stina commented: "we did not have such seriously disturbed children in schools before".

The boy had repeatedly been diagnosed as severely ill and disturbed, but it was here that Stina feels that parents overruled all other stakeholders, including the parents of other children in the school, a situation which was also different from what it used to be. In

Stina's experience, the psychiatrist did not fully support the school, even though he witnessed the student having fits of aggression in his office and behaving in a violent and threatening manner. "We are in need of support from the system when we have problems of this magnitude. I feel that we are terribly much on our own". Others endorsed this view. For instance, Maggi, one of the deputies, talked about the "general lack of resources for any deviations from the norm". At the time of the interview, Stina had needed to send five members of staff to see a doctor for medical certificates testifying to the injuries they suffered because the boy had bitten them badly. The boy's mother, however, accused the staff of not being able to deal with her son and "apparently her voice is listened to".

This is one of the issues I find difficult to cope with because I have no control over it. I feel that I'm abusing my staff by making them put up with something which is unacceptable. And I admit that a few days ago when I was visited by a father who took his daughter out of the school because of the situation and I just told him to write a letter to the disciplinary committee.

At the time of the interview Stina had yet to find a solution for the pupil. Apparently the situation did not leave her with many options and she described how alone she felt with the problem. Meanwhile, the boy continued to disrupt the work of the school, and many of the children were scared of him. As the quotation above shows, Stina, in her almost desperate search for solutions, tried to put pressure on the educational authorities by encouraging parents to direct their complaints about the boy directly to the superintendency. This situation is the part of autonomy which is rarely highlighted, that there are times when head teachers, and their staff, are expected to solve a problem without having access to the necessary resources. Money is not the only resource that is scarce. There is a lack of solutions in the health system as well. One way or another, schools are required to solve the problems and if they for some reason cannot, then it is their problem. Stina's experience is shared by others, such as Haddi, whose dilemmas are discussed next.

6.5 "I Do not Say I Am Losing Sleep Because of this, but I Must Admit that I Worry..."

Narratives relating to the lack of resources when it comes to children with the most severe emotional, psychological and behavioural problems in the public schools are common in head teachers' narratives. Haddi mentioned that in this area very little progress had been made.

The resources when it comes to severe psychological problems or disciplinary problems are very limited. Very little has changed. It is just the same old story and often we spend considerable time on trying to resolve them... it's as if there is a gap in the administrative hierarchy.

Haddi did not discuss one particular case, but rather spoke in general terms about several similar cases he had been working on and trying to resolve in his first five years of headship. Because the nature of these examples is similar, they are treated here as if they were a single vignette.

Haddi, who is in his early fifties had been a head teacher for five years. Like Halli, he became a head teacher without prior administrative experience, but had had a long and successful career as a teacher. At the time, the school in question was going through a rough time. Until a few years earlier it was characterized by stability and a low staff turnover rate. The same head teacher had been in post for over 20 years when he retired and was replaced by a woman head. She resigned after only a few years and it is at that point that Haddi stepped in. Apparently these changes had caused a snowball effect, and one year 10-15 teachers, mostly those with the longest careers, left the school. By the time Haddi became a head teacher, only about 1/3 of the original the teaching staff remained. These changes caused turmoil in various areas in the school, which in Haddi's opinion had an impact on the general working climate in the school, not just on the staff but also on the pupils: "there was an undercurrent of anger among them," and one of the consequences was serious vandalism. On several occasions, windows were broken. "This was unbelievable, windows were broken, big windows ...this was terrible and I asked myself what on earth I was doing here I was devastated".

At the time of the interview, Haddi had managed to put an end to this kind of outburst in the school by working with the children in various ways. For instance, he provided them with areas which were theirs to protect and left them a handsome wall on which they could paint whatever they liked and whenever they wanted to.

According to Haddi, his school was in a district which was known to be "heavy" in the sense that a high proportion of homes and families were dealing with various types of social problems, some of them serious. Although some of the children who came from these homes did well in the school, there were others who did not and, as mentioned above, many of the most difficult problems in relation to these children followed a similar pattern.

Typically, these children suffered from severe psychological or disciplinary problems, resulting in an extremely disruptive behaviour, which impacted upon people from all the administrative arenas. Haddi described such cases. At the organizational level, teachers of these children pressed for appropriate solutions because they cared for them and were also worried that the right of other pupils in their classes to study in a safe and friendly environment was being violated. Parents of the disturbed children were either unable to work with the school or opposed every effort it made to find solutions for their children. The message from the education authorities was that problems of this kind were for the schools themselves to solve: they were, after all, autonomous, yet the resources within the school as well as outside them were very limited.

The messages from the authorities also echo the city's policy on special education from 2001, (see The 2004 Annual Educational Report of the City of Reykjavík), which puts the inclusive school at the forefront. Schools are expected "to cater for the needs of all children, the physically healthy as well as the handicapped, in their local schools" (2005, p. 44). Even if the publication of this policy highlighted inclusion, it had been practised for years in all the city's schools. In 1997, for instance, the total number of students in mainstream compulsory schools in Reykjavík was almost 14,000, while 177 students were in special schools (The 2004 Annual Educational Report of the City of Reykjavík, 2005, p. 29). Since then this policy has been further strengthened and seven years later, in 2004, the ratio was down to 150,000/150. In theory, professional school staff does not oppose the policy of inclusive education. None of the interviewees in this research indicated that they viewed this policy unfavourably. As mentioned above, in most instances the policy had long since been implemented for the majority of school children in the city's schools. What seems to be causing the greatest problems is the lack of resources for children with the most serious disciplinary problems as well as those who are mentally ill. Three special schools operate in the city of Reykjavík and only one of them caters for this group of children (The 2005 Policy Statement of the City of Reykjavík, p. 38). There is one children's hospital for mentally disturbed children but the waiting lists are very long and have been for years.

The situation concerning the above group of children is further highlighted in a report published by The Surgeon-General's Office Iceland in 2000. The report presents the findings of a committee that in 1999 was asked to "examine the problems of children and adolescents with mental illnesses or mental problems outside hospitals" (Children

and Young People with Mental Problems – Services Outside Hospitals, p. 3). The committee concludes that:

Today a number of children with long lasting physical and mental illnesses attend compulsory schools. Medication within the schools is growing and also the need for other professional treatment within the schools. Behavioral and mental problems have called for an increase in the co-operation of health- and school systems both in terms of analysis and treatment”

(2000, p. 13).

The group provides a detailed list of recommendations such as providing schools with the necessary financial resources for this particular group of children and establishing a special school that children with the most severe mental problems can attend for shorter periods of time (p. 21). At the time of Haddi’s narrative, the recommendations were yet to be implemented in the field.

He reported other incidents which also involved stakeholders from the different arenas. For instance a divorced parent might call Haddi and demand information about her/his child because the other parent refused to communicate. The superintendency, might then contact him, with the aid of the city lawyer and warn him against giving information beyond what he was required or allowed to give by law.

Haddi also recalled a child who was, at the time, in a mental hospital for children but had been without the proper care for a long time because his parents refused to accept that he was ill. However, as he was a large and physically strong and aggressive boy, he posed a threat to both children and staff in the school for months.

There were also times when Haddi was called to testify in cases of custody disputes and in the most severe cases Haddi has to report to Child Protection Agency. At the time of the interview, Haddi estimates that there are 12-14 such cases on his table, and over the previous five years three children have been removed from their parents’ custody and placed in foster care, a step which is only taken when every other avenue has been tried. All such cases are not only time-consuming but also delicate and complicated.

While Haddi communicated with agents in the various administrative arenas, he kept up his search for the appropriate solution for the child within the welfare system. Each single case could take months to resolve. Meanwhile, representatives of all the arenas were affected one way or another and Haddi, as a head teacher, was under pressure to find solutions and bring matters to a conclusion.

In the end, solutions were found but they could take a long time to implement because there were usually long waiting lists for the specialized services these children needed. As mentioned before, there were, however, other reasons for the delay, such as parents' resistance. Apparently this could be trying, but nonetheless Haddi maintained: "I don't say I lose sleep because of this, but I must admit I worry that there may be too many children who are not properly looked after".

Even though Haddi maintained he did not lose sleep over these problems and the conflicting interests he was expected to serve, it may be assumed that both the nature of these issues and their magnitude, would, by necessity call for the contemplation of various complicated, ethical, emotional, practical and legal aspects of the case. These contemplations would call for the constant involvement of the *self* in which Haddi would conduct an inner dialogue with himself.

Haddi's narrative indicates that it is the individual child who is always at the core of his intentions and actions. He worried that "there are too many children who lead a life in misery ... and sometimes. I have the feeling that the best time in these children's life is when they are here in the school". The way Haddi talked about the children, the important role their schools played in their lives, and his responsibility for them has many common elements to those found in Gunna's narrative in Chapter 5.

The way Haddi talked about his commitment indicates that even in cases where, for reasons of health, the children had to leave the school, Haddi made every effort to keep them in it. Haddi positioned himself within the discourse of pedagogy, often in the face of competing demands of different stakeholders. At the level of *community-culture*, parents act as consumers and speak of their right either to keep their children at the school, however ill they may be, or demand immediate solutions which are not to be found. In some instances, parents of other children, such as the father in Stina's school, demand safety and peace for their children out of the way of those who are disruptive. At the same level, but further away, the educational authorities refer to the schools' autonomy and expect them to find the necessary solutions. At the *organizational* level, the head teacher works towards solutions with his staff, based on their professional, pedagogical expertise. When these efforts do not work, they eventually put pressure on him to find solutions outside the school. This is a complicated web of competing discourses of customers' rights and demands for the delivery of high-quality services within a professional environment of limited resources inside and outside the schools.

6.6 “I Have Been Trying to Avoid Hurting the Person”

Addi is in his early forties, a few years older than Gulla. He is therefore one of the youngest head teachers in the city, and 10-20 years younger than the other four male head teachers interviewed. He became a head teacher four years ago. Before taking on his present post, and having been a deputy for a few years, he decided to take up teaching again, and did so for three years. This was a conscious decision to enter the field of practice again; he had only taught for two years when he became a deputy head.

Addi was concerned about a teacher about whom parents had been complaining heavily. Addi knew that the parents had some reason for concern, “and one has to balance on this tightrope, which is very difficult if you know there are at least some grounds for criticism”. The teacher in question suffered from depression, and Addi had great sympathy for her. To him it was extremely important to let the teacher know that he had no objection to her personally. He explained that this was even more important because the school was in an environment where rumours spread easily and parents had a history of forming hostile groups on issues they were unhappy about. Addi was aware of how fragile the reputation of a teacher is in such a climate. He himself came from a small rural community and was thus quite familiar with the implications of such a situation. The fact remained, however, that “this causes unbelievable work for me”. Because the teacher was suffering from this problem, all kinds of trivial matters that teachers normally take care of themselves, become overwhelming for her. Among other things, this meant that Siggi had to accompany the teacher at every teacher-parent meeting.

Addi’s dilemma resembled that of Siggi below. Representatives of all three arenas were involved. Parents demanded that the teacher be dismissed from her employment, arguing that her presence was damaging to their children. The teachers agreed, although they did not directly voice their claim to have the teacher fired. Apparently their concern for their students overrode their concern for their colleague.

When Addi was asked what was his guiding light in the matter he said: “It’s..., of course it is the children ...”. Addi knew that the teacher had serious health problems but was reluctant to admit that they constituted an immediate threat to the children. He argued that the teacher was highly qualified and when she was well, she had proved to be a successful teacher and kind to the children. At the time of interviewing, Addi had not found the solution to the problem, but explained:

I have been trying to avoid hurting the person. At the moment, they (the parents) have withdrawn but I've been told they're only waiting for the end of the school year. Now the teachers are coming to my office and asking "she is not going to teach 'my' class is she"? This is a little...".

The quotation shows that even though Addi was concerned about the children, he was probably no less concerned about the well-being of the teacher. He therefore made an effort to ensure the teacher was justly and rightfully treated, that she was not in any way humiliated or hurt and could, in due course, leave her job with her dignity intact. Addi explains that he tried to avoid any involvement of the teachers, but this was not easy. He had just finished the annual staff interviews and the teacher in question asked which of her colleagues could possibly have complained about her. Apparently word had got to her about complaints from her colleagues, but Addi did not want her to know more than was strictly necessary about any rumours in relation to her situation. He remembered that on earlier occasions the teacher had mentioned what a good relationship she had with her colleagues.

Addi was concerned about the consequences for the teacher if the word were out that she had severe mental problems. Moreover, although he seemed to be convinced that the teacher would not cause any harm to the children, he could hardly be completely certain about this. Apparently, though, it was the teacher who was his most immediate concern. For her sake, he was willing to take pressure from the various stakeholders both inside and outside the school and almost tip-toed between them while looking for a permanent solution. Thus he neither sought nor expected the consent of other stakeholders; rather, he avoided their involvement because he perceived them as potential threats to the teacher.

In this matter, Addi clearly situated himself outside the discourse of 'customers' rights' (Gewirtz, 2002). If he had not, he would have given in to the demands of stakeholders earlier, instead of going to these lengths in order to keep the teacher in her post. Addi emphasized the humanistic values of care, respect and integrity and was ready to take risks to ensure that the teacher was well and justly treated. The way he talked about the situation and the problems it has involved, suggests that he had the upper hand in the whole scenario and thus was never overpowered by his environment.

6.7 “My Conscience Was so Clear. I Think that Is What Made the Difference ...”

Gulla is in her early forties and the youngest head teacher participating in this study. In many ways, her situation is quite different from that of the others. She runs one of the newest schools in the city, located in one of the rapidly growing suburbs. When she was appointed there was no school building, no staff and no pupils. She began with a group of 30 pupils but at the time of the interview they were nearly 400. She spent the first year working with stakeholders from both the micro- and macro environment of the school, representing all the administrative arenas, parents, superintendency and school staff. When the school began she had therefore been working with these people for months. Together they developed the school policy and worked closely with an architect before deciding what kind of a building was needed for this kind of school. From the very beginning, Gulla therefore established a working relationship with representatives of stakeholders. Moreover, when the school finally opened, Gulla had personally chosen every teacher and other members of staff. These people were appointed to develop and implement the policy which had already been drafted. This situation is unique as none of the other head teachers had begun their headship career under the same or similar circumstances. For instance, if we compare Gulla with people like Runa, Stina and Krista, it is clear that the route they followed into headship was entirely different and all of this undoubtedly impacts on the way they were received and approached. All of this is likely to have helped Gulla in the pioneering stage of her career.

The re-structuring of education in Iceland, including the city of Reykjavík, has caused much disquiet, especially among teachers. This has had a similar impact in Gulla's school, as it has in the other schools in the city. In the past 10-15 years, teachers have repeatedly gone on a strike, sometimes for weeks or months. This has been a difficult situation for all stakeholders. Below is an incident which involved a recent long-lasting strike and its impact on Gulla's school which is one of the newest suburban city schools. Gulla did not admit that the vignette she related was a real dilemma, but it is included here because, regardless of how she, as a head teacher, defines the situation, it has the characteristics of a dilemma. This narrative is also included because it illuminates an important aspect of the re-structuring of schools, that of almost perpetual conflicts between teachers and their union, on one hand, and their macro-environment on the other.

In this particular incident, Gulla was faced with a situation which, in her opinion, involved the choice between a short-term inconvenience and long term benefits of her course of action in dealing with a situation which unexpectedly presented itself. A few years ago, teachers went on a strike which lasted for weeks. As time passed and no solution was in sight, parents, in particular, became impatient and aired their antagonism towards teachers in the media and teachers were portrayed as caring more about themselves than their pupils. The year before, the teachers at Gulla's school, in co-operation with the superintendency, had agreed to go abroad and visit schools as a part of their in-service training. This was seen as an important step in supporting and promoting the policy of the school, and as a part of teachers' continual professional development. Journeys of this kind are usually planned at least a year ahead and the trip in question was scheduled towards the end of the school year.

When the strike continued, people started joking about the unlikelihood of the dispute being solved on the day of teachers' departure. This, however, was exactly what happened. In the early hours, Radio 1 announced that the strike had been resolved and teachers would be summoned to start their teaching in a few hours. Around midday, the 36 city schools had opened their doors and teachers had resumed their teaching.

As mentioned above, Gulla's school is relatively new, since it is located in one of the most recently-built and densely populated suburban areas in Reykjavik. Typically, the families who live there mostly include young children. These children, like those in other areas in the city, were undoubtedly anxiously waiting to get back to school and resume their studies. In Gulla's school, the children would, however, have to wait for a few more days while their teachers and their head teacher went abroad to broaden their horizons. Even though Gulla dismissed the possibility of an emergent dilemma, it is clear that she was faced with two options and neither of them was perfect. The first was to call the trip off and resume teaching, as all other teachers in the city were doing. This would have greatly disappointed the teachers and, more importantly, been damaging to their professional careers. The other was to go abroad, as planned, and trust that the benefits would outweigh the drawbacks, such as anger or indignation from parents or the media, and this is what she did.

When Gulla was asked what went through her mind in these strange circumstances she said her greatest fear was "that our trip would be ruined, that was my main worry". On the other hand, she never wavered in her determination to go, because, as she says "I

knew this would pass and the trip was of such importance for the work of the school”.

Asked if this was not an agonizing situation for her as a head teacher, she said:

No, strangely enough...my conscience was so clear, I think that's what made the difference I knew this would be greatly beneficial for our work. I knew it would benefit the kids and this was a planned trip at this particular time, it was not as if we had just thought of this: it had all been organized the year (spring) before. No, I didn't agonize.

The rationale Gulla gives for going abroad with the teachers instead of resuming teaching after six weeks on strike, is that it was in the interest of the children, her pupils. In her opinion, they would be the prime beneficiaries of this trip. This was her guiding light, faced with a somewhat ambivalent situation.

Three factors, more than others, probably impacted upon Gulla's determination. Firstly, her own positive experience of continuing, professional development, which she describes as almost a life changing experience in her early days of headship. Secondly, her staff, the teachers who had been planning this trip for so long, was in favour of going. Thirdly, and probably most importantly, she and the staff had the full support of the superintendent in their endeavour towards professional development. Even though she knew there were individuals and groups in both the macro, -and micro environment of the school who were not only surprised, but even offended, that she could take her teachers on a trip rather than resume teaching, she could more or less ignore them because of her superior's support. This is likely to have given her the necessary strength to remain loyal to her own conviction that the teachers should go even though some individuals and groups at the level of *community-culture*, objected to it. Gulla seems to have been predominantly thinking about the consequences of her decision. Even if she dismissed the possibility of an emergent dilemma, she can hardly have avoided worrying about the consequences of not going as well as of going. Both options are thus likely to have been contemplated.

One element makes this dilemma stand out from the others. While other dilemmas most often involve conflicting interests of stakeholders of the micro-and macro environment of schools, this one does not. The most powerful stakeholder of the *community-culture* arena, the superintendency, situated itself within the pedagogical discourse with teachers in the arena of the *organization* and the head teacher at the level of *self*.

Gulla's school has an impressive website, loaded with information about the various activities of staff and students. It also contains detailed information about the

organization of the daily life in the school as well as practical information for all the stakeholders: parents, pupils and staff. The school publishes a handbook and a voluminous school prospectus but surprisingly it does not contain or offer a vision or a policy of its own. Instead, it refers to the objectives set forth by the municipality. Even if the other schools acknowledge this official policy they nevertheless elaborate on it in relation to what they see as being particular or special about their own ways of doing things. This may suggest that Gulla and her staff identify more with the city's policy because they have been working with representatives of the city since before the school opened formally. If this is the case, they may have seen their policy, and the city's as one and the same.

The objectives of the school can, however, be found. A few years ago, several of Gulla's teachers published an article about the work of the school. They talked about a new school for a new century and according to them, its main objectives are to make pupils responsible for their education and autonomous in their studies. It also aims to provide the pupils with an opportunity to organize their own education up to a point, choose subjects and projects depending on their interests and become competent in evaluating their, and other pupils', progress. It also aims to provide the pupils with an opportunity to practice their social skills in cooperation with other pupils and the teachers.

The focus and content of these aims is somewhat different from that of the other schools. Most prominent is the emphasis on the pupils as free agents who are seen capable of organizing their studies. If the school has in fact managed to point the pupils in this autonomous direction, they may be more able than pupils in general to cope on their own, as long as they receive some professional assistance.

Gulla says she was primarily thinking about her pupils' education when she decided to stick to the original plan and go abroad with the teachers. Even if the pupils had already been out of school for weeks, because of teachers' strike, she was convinced that the benefits of teachers' trip abroad would outweigh the further delay. As Gulla said "my conscience was so clear..."

The last dilemma is from Siggi, below, who is the only head teacher who related experiences from both sides, that of a superior and that of a subordinate. The following is his narrative involving his role and decisions as a head of staff.

6.8 “Well, it Is Sort of Hard ... to Tell Somebody that she/he just Has to Leave”

Siggi remembers a recent, particularly difficult, staff-related problem, involving a newly-hired young male teacher of whom he had great expectations. However, it soon became obvious that something was wrong, because the teacher was more or less always absent from work. This led to a long process of discussions and negotiations until eventually the truth of the matter was out in the open: the teacher was suffering from severe depression. By then, his pupils had given up on him and his fellow teachers were becoming overburdened by the extra work his long-lasting and recurrent absenteeism has caused them. In the end, when it became obvious that the teacher would have to leave, Siggi had one last meeting with him. Siggi told the teacher that if he had been honest with him from the beginning, he was confident that together they would have been able to find a much better solution than was possible now, six months into the school year.

Siggi's decision came as a result of almost six months of negotiations during which he tried to get to grips with the underlying reasons for the teacher's behaviour. In the end, when the matter came to a head and the teacher had to leave, Siggi says he was primarily thinking about the welfare of his pupils. However, he had also become increasingly concerned about the impact of all of this on the other teachers. He had noticed that they not only repeatedly covered the teaching for their colleague, but they were also defending him by putting in words of excuse “against their better judgement”. Although Siggi knew they were being loyal to a fellow teacher, he felt burdened by the fact that they were in a position where they felt it had become necessary to resort to lies in defence of their colleague. This he found unacceptable.

When Siggi was asked to reflect on the essence of his account and try to locate what it really was that made this problem difficult to the degree that he regards this experience as a dilemma, he answered:

Well it is sort of hard to decide, when you have reached this stage, that you are ready to tell somebody that he/she has to leave, that this person has to face the fact that either he/she needs to go somewhere else or, as in the case of illness, to do something about it because she/he is really doing our children terribly wrong, every single day.

Elaborating on this, Siggi pointed out that confronting somebody in this way is a serious matter, the person in question is unwell and legally there are no grounds for firing an ill

person in this position: his or her rights are indisputable. However, when this stage was reached, all the formally required procedures had been followed and ethically, Siggi felt he had done everything that could be expected through repeated offers to help and adapt the job to the teacher's needs.

The primary motivation for Siggi's decision was to avoid the potentially serious consequences of the situation. His concern was focused on several stakeholders: the students, the teacher in question, the other members of staff and the parents. All along, Siggi was thus dealing with the problem in all the school arenas. Siggi came to accept that the problem could not be solved within the school and thus the only long-term solution would be for the teacher to leave the school and obtain professional help. His main rationale for encouraging the teacher to leave was to ensure the welfare of the pupils and the staff. As his narrative clearly indicates, to him, honesty was a major issue in every human encounter and consequently he encouraged the teacher to let honesty guide him in the future. A secondary motivational force for Siggi's decision was consensus. Even though the staff were apparently loyal to the teacher in question, Siggi was under considerable pressure to fire the teacher, at least from parts of the staff, and also the pupils and their parents. In the time leading up to the teacher's resignation Siggi was constantly negotiating not only with the teacher but also with his trade union. His consultative manner is apparent in the way he conferred with colleagues and specialists, such as lawyers and psychologists. Siggi's decision was driven by a commitment to values, e.g. care and equality, and also to professional standards and thus it falls clearly within the cluster of "welfarism" (Gewirtz, 2002).

The most apparent value to emerge from all of Siggi's narrative is his commitment to be a caring, supportive superior. His care was not only focused on the teacher in question, but on the other members of staff, who had become burdened by the situation. He was worried about the increased workload of the teachers and the psychological implications of their defending a severely ill colleague to the extent of being prepared to lie for him. In all of Siggi's narratives, the values of integrity and honesty reappear. To him, it was unacceptable for the teachers to be in a position where they felt compelled to put aside these qualities to protect a colleague from an unpleasant situation. This may have been the bottom line and he therefore wanted to relieve the teachers of this burden.

6.9 Summary

This chapter further examined the impact of recent educational changes on Icelandic head teachers. The narratives provide further answers to the first research question about the ways in which head teachers' values are reflected in their actions and also the sub-question on the influence of values on their actions. Here, head teachers relate experiences which affected some of them in a manner which might be described as life-changing. This is particularly true about the conflicts they had with stakeholders outside the administrative arena of the organisation, mainly the superintendency and parents. The other dilemmas involved their staff at the level of organisation and shed light on how, when the roles were reversed, the head teachers attempted to solve them. One of the six head teachers, whose dilemmas are examined in the chapter, is the narrator on both sides of the table, as an employee involved in conflicts with his superiors and as a superior trying to solve staff-related problems in his own school.

The discussion above moreover shows how conceptions of the role of schools have gradually been expanded to include not only teaching and pedagogy but also various other services which, until recently, were not seen as a part of educational provisions. This development has consequently changed both the nature and scope of the role of educational leaders. Some of the head teachers have opposed this development and see it as an indication of a move from pedagogical concerns and towards management and managerialism. Krista is the one who most openly expressed such a view. Others, such as the deputy head, Thor admit that their role has changed dramatically but accept that this is the way society has been heading and believe that schools can only follow suit.

Chapter 7

The Role of Headship. Shaping or Adapting?

7.0 Introduction

The changing role of head teachers has not only increased their workload but has also changed the nature of their work. Apparently, these changes have not always been to their liking. The dilemmas described above indicate that all the head teachers experienced conflicts which often required them to look inward, reflect and arrive at decisions which were primarily value-related. In order to do this, they searched for guidance in the values they held, whether consciously or not.

This chapter attempts to answer the second research question concerning head teachers' reactions when they perceive their own values to be in conflict with those in their environment. One way of doing this is to examine to what degree head teachers are able to let their values inform their practice and shape their role as head teachers.

But what are the determining factors that shape the role of head teachers? This was one of the questions discussed earlier in the thesis. Is the role, and its scope and nature, determined solely by dominant educational discourses and external agents, and their values, or can holders of the position, the head teachers themselves, have an impact and even shape the role so as to align it with their own values and those of their staff? Are head teachers in a position to influence the direction into which the role is heading or are they more or less powerless, caught up in conflicting demands between the various internal and external stakeholders of the school's administrative arenas? Recent research has established (see Chapter 2) that there are contemporary head teachers who find themselves in a position to influence the nature and scope of their role.

Five head teachers (three women and two men), tell their stories in this chapter. All of these are value-related vignettes and all except the last one, (7.6) presents a dilemma. This last vignette, told by Siggi, is included because it is different, interesting and sheds light on his values.

7.1 “I Did it my Way”

Asi is in his early fifties. He has been in his present post, in one of the comprehensive schools in the city, for seven years. In the years leading up to his headship, he was a deputy in the same school for a few years. Earlier, as a recently graduated teacher, Asi had been a head teacher in a one-classroom school in a rural area for a few years but for the better part of his career Asi taught in compulsory schools in Reykjavik or rural villages. At the time of the interviews he had spent a year abroad studying school administration.

Asi says he is generally satisfied with the current educational policy but objects to externally imposed targets irrespective of schools' needs. Many of the schools have a long history of highly developed practices that serve their particular community well. In these cases, Asi saw no point in coercing the staff into adopting models, work procedures or ideas simply because the city said so. When Asi was asked if he found the detailed target-setting that went hand in hand with monitoring, restricting for his autonomy, his answer shows how he saw his role and what appeared to be his attempts at shaping it.

Well, we are supposed to have it [autonomy] but we don't, but I have acted as if I have it; I've done that. It does not worry me if we are close to the bottom on this check-list or that or because they indicate that we are not providing some service that others do, I just explain it, it's as simple as that, this is my calling, is what I say.

To highlight Asi's point of view, it is helpful to look at an incident which he described as involving one of the most difficult tasks he has encountered: implementing a new teachers' employment contract. The situation arose out of a new teachers' collective agreement made five years previously, which provided for increased contact time of teachers. This issue had been heavily disputed and many teachers felt that the municipalities, in unison with teachers' associations, were putting further pressures on them through closer monitoring of their work. Many of the head teachers also felt uncomfortable with these added responsibilities which were being assigned to them.

As an afterthought, Asi admitted that he may have been choosing the easiest way out of an emerging dilemma; on the other hand, he explained: “What was required was that I, as a manager, should treat the teachers differently. I decided not to.” Others might disagree and argue that on the contrary, his duty was to treat them, if not equally, then at least fairly. To them, paying the same amount of money to those who delivered high-

quality work as to those whose performance was poorer could hardly be seen as fair or just.

Asi refused to oblige teachers to spend more working hours on the school premises than before. Instead, he set up deadlines for work projects and development programmes which teachers could work on where and when they wanted, but made sure their timetable allowed for meetings of various sizes along the way as necessary. “You see, we are running a school here, we have pupils, we need to attend to them and I must only put moderate pressure on my teachers”.

The contract called for other changes to be executed by the head teacher, e.g. pay-related quality assessment. Here too, Asi did not follow the main stream and decided instead to allocate almost all the money equally amongst the teachers. He explains that doing otherwise would have meant more dramatic changes than teachers were ready to face.

I based this on my own experience as a teacher and of course I knew the reality of the teaching profession; of course what was being done was to completely overthrow the old ideology.

The ‘old ideology’ Asi was referring to here relates to the earlier arrangement by which teachers were paid for the amount of work they delivered (contact time, preparation time, etc.) rather than for the assessed quality of the work. “I heard from my people, [the teachers] that this [equal payments] was their strong conviction and ... I just chose the gentlest approach”.

Icelandic teachers commonly argue that they are the experts on teaching and all teaching-related issues such as educational leadership. This argument is supported strongly by the Teachers’ Union, and together these agents dominate the discourse on the role of teachers and head teachers. In this dilemma, Asi situates himself within this discourse and provides a rationale for his actions, based on considerations of equality. However, as his narrative indicates, his main concern was to avoid difficult conflicts between himself and these two other stakeholders, his teachers at the level of organization and the teachers’ union at the level of *community-culture*. This suggests that the primary motivation for Asi’s decision is consensus. He emphasizes conformity with the norms of his group of teachers, takes notes of peer pressure and even expert opinion, (Hodgkinson, 1991). It may be assumed that the outcome Asi expected was not only equal treatment of his subjects but a peaceful and harmonious working atmosphere

(through consensus) among the teachers and between himself and the teachers. Asi argued that teachers needed to focus on their students and could not easily do so if they were burdened by other chores which they, at least, might see as unrelated to their teaching. This, along with his emphasis on equality, to treat the teachers in what he perceived to be an equal manner, was his main rationale for not requiring teachers to stay in the school after finishing their daily teaching duties. It must however be remembered, that Asi himself observed, that possibly his decision had to do with the fact that a dilemma was emerging. He may have worried that his professional authority would be compromised or questioned by both staff and the teachers' union if he evaluated teachers' work contributions and consequently gave a rationale for his decisions to pay some of them more than others. Moreover, Asi's emphasis on collective relations, his consultative manner and his commitment to values such as equality, justice and care show that his decision fell within the cluster of 'welfarism' (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe, 1995, p. 94). His emphasis on teaching and learning indicates his concern for professional standards. However, he was equally driven by the need to ensure harmonious working relations and this may have overruled other concerns in the end.

The way Asi approached what he humorously called "an emerging dilemma" indicates that he was resourceful and firm when it came to matters which he deemed important and readily provided justifications for his actions (Hodgkinson, 1991). This also indicates that Asi did not unilaterally adapt to new circumstances but also tried to shape new demands to fit what he perceived to be the wishes and needs of his school and his personnel. Thus, Asi acted as a person who had agency in his circumstances and talked as if he was in no way overpowered by them.

Apparently Asi was not overwhelmed in the face of demands for conformity. The potentially powerful mechanisms for influencing the way schools function in the market place, so described by Gewirtz (2002), did not seem to render him powerless. This was not without a cost. He had serious disputes with his superiors and he commented with a wry smile that he is seen as one of the most disobedient head teachers in the city. He did not report on such incidents in relation to parents and pupils but the senior staff gave him a hard time when the present deputy head was hired.

Documentary sources about Asi's school supported what he said about teaching and learning being at the heart of the school. The staff handbook includes statements such

as: “the vision is that of ensuring that pupils make constant educational and social improvements and to encourage them to become autonomous in their educational efforts”. This text is replete with values: “ The school strives to offer flexible education ... and to produce pupils who are creative, tolerant, ambitious and able”. In the light of Asi’s rationale for some of his most difficult decisions the opening line in the school’s “guiding principles” gains significance: “We are all equal, all pupils are my pupils”.

This documentary source also indicates that Asi was also concerned about having efficient structures in place: the handbook contains detailed information about organisation of work, descriptions of roles and work processes relating to issues such as discipline, special needs, support services and duties of teachers and parents. In a section called “Supplement” this text is to be found: “It is our policy to educate in a friendly and creative environment where every individual is respected“.

One way to ensure equality is by encouraging dialogue, especially on sensitive and controversial issues; this is something Asi emphasized in the interview. The following quotation, under the heading “A covenant for the school community” serves well as Asi’s concluding remark:

The school is both a place of work and a community. The community is composed of three agents: pupils, staff and parents. All members of the community are entitled to justice and respect for everything which is well done. The community must strive to establish a good organizational climate and to solve problems in a peaceful way and in a way which respects everyone’s human rights.

However, the document does not provide descriptions or definitions of the key concepts, *justice*, *respect* and *human rights*. The staff, pupils and parents may, nonetheless, share a common view on their meanings and how to act them out in their school community.

7.2 “I Am trying to Adapt”

Adaptation is the word Krista used to explain how she responds to these changes. This does not mean, however, that she never puts up a fight. Krista, a woman in her late sixties, and a head teacher in one of the elementary schools at the time of interviewing, was not always in agreement with the demands for new services. On several occasions she fought with considerable force to resist offering services she did not think her school was fit to take on or because of her principles (Hodgkinson, 1991) about the role of schools.

It was over catering services that Krista had one of her most serious disputes with external stakeholders. The parents were determined, and demanded hot meals in the school, but Krista and her staff refused, arguing that the school had not been designed with such services in mind and the children should not need to have their meals in their classrooms. This led to a two-year dispute which harmed school-home relations until finally an additional building solved the problem. There were other serious disputes. In the early 1990s, when the municipality required all schools to offer day-care services, Krista resisted for quite a while. "I was unhappy about this. I found this custodian role of the school unacceptable and wanted to emphasize the pedagogical and educational role of the school". Yet, there was no way out and in the late 1990s, all the schools in the city were offering services of these types and their capacity to do so was gradually improved.

These conflicts over the provision of new services, were between Krista, as a head teacher on one hand, and her teachers, the *organization*, and the parents in unison with the city authorities, the *community- culture*, on the other. The latter group was joined in claiming their 'right' as parents and consumers, to this particular service, where hot meals or various after-school services were involved. In their view the school, as a service institution, had a duty to make these provisions but Krista rejected their argument on both practical and professional grounds. In her opinion, neither did the school premises allow for the provision of these services nor did the school have a duty to provide them.

Krista situated herself within the discourse of teaching and pedagogy, but narrowly defined and not necessarily in accordance with the dominant definition at the time. When Krista took on headship she had been a model teacher in one of the most progressive schools in the city for years. When she became a head teacher she announced that the work would be in the spirit of open-plan schools, even if the building which housed the school was far from ideal for it. Years later, when a new school building was established, it was designed with regard to the ideology of open-plan schools. At the time, however, no discussion took place about providing further services on the premises. As the requirement, and later demand for these services, was reiterated, the pressure to implement them became such that it could not be ignored. This impacted negatively on the pedagogical work of the school, which in some instances had to be restructured to make room for these duties.

As these examples show, Krista's opposition at times had serious, long-lasting consequences for her relations with both parents and superiors to whom she nonetheless referred with humility. She appealed to her duty as a civil servant who has agreed to take on the responsibility of headship and to obey the orders of her superiors. In spite of her opposition to many of the new requirements, she perceived herself as being loyal to her superiors: "of course I'm not working against the system. I'm trying to adapt and I'm committed to my work as an administrator and work with integrity".

Krista's concerns, like Stina's, were primarily pedagogical. In the interviews she easily articulated her own role and that of the school, and these provided the rationale for her actions. Her account indicated that among her guiding values were justice, fairness and equity. She worried that the individual children would not receive the necessary attention and care in this new environment. Like Asi, Krista did not want her teachers to be distracted from what she saw as the core activities of the school: teaching and learning. In her opinion schools should therefore not be responsible for catering- and day-care services. This was her rationale and explained her determination to put up a fight with the parents. For a long time, she kept her ground even after additional pressure was brought upon her, and the school, by both her superiors and the competitive environment, in which one school after another offered these, and similar services.

However, the motivational base for Krista's decision is not obvious. Neither consensus nor consequences seem to be her motivating force, yet her motivation was not based on self-interest. Even if Krista intended to avoid the additional organizing of work and procedures (something she gave no indication of), her argument to focus on pedagogical matters holds. Having excluded three of the motivational bases in Hodgkinson's model, only one remains: ethics/principle. In spite of being known as the leader of a pedagogically radical school, Krista's views about school's role in a rapidly changing society can be seen as traditional, rejecting new roles and responsibilities that a changing society calls for. Krista seemed to emphasize "established cultural norms" and "entrenched societal values" which do not necessarily require to be rationally justified because they are seen as being "beyond" justification. (Begley, 2003, p. 7-8; Hodgkinson, 1978; 1991). If Gewirtz's model is applied here, it shows that Krista's decisions were driven by commitment to professional standards and values, such as those above, e.g. equity, care and social justice, all of which she referred to in her narrative. Other criteria in that cluster, however, do not apply equally well to her

actions. Krista's narrative neither indicated a particularly consultative approach nor collective relations, probably because she did not see this as a matter for debate and therefore, from her point of view, a rationale may not have been needed. In this sense Krista was being authoritarian in relation to this particular issue. Taken together, Krista's actions nevertheless place her in Gewirtz's welfarist cluster rather than that of 'new managerialism'.

Krista situated herself outside the current discourse on schools and their role as service institutions with obligations to 'customers'. She therefore fought constantly, supported by her staff but not necessarily the parents. Sometimes she fought with agents of the immediate community, such as parents but also those of the broader culture, such as the superintendency.

The documents pertaining to Krista's school shed a further light on her educational vision. The school has a detailed school prospectus which also serves as a handbook about the school. The following quotation marks the basis of the school's policy:

In we strive to shape the work into meeting pupils' individual interests and needs and to support them in becoming independent thinking and working individuals. We also try to meet the expectations of society for pupils' education as required by the National School Curriculum.

Among the main objectives are the following: a) that teaching methods, teaching materials and environment meet pupils' interests, development and abilities. b) to encourage initiative and independence and support creative thought and interpretation. c) to promote pupils' ethical- and social awareness. d) to develop their skills to work with others.

There are obvious parallels between the published text about the school and the way Krista described the work of the school. The most apparent themes revolve around the school's responsibility to ensure that each individual pupil has her/his needs met and is supported in the continuous effort to develop to her/his full potential. Apart from direct quotations from legal texts, these documents do not include any elaboration of the role of schooling in society or the role of the head teacher. This is interesting in the light of Krista's articulated views in the interview and her approach to critical incidents which appeared to be motivated by strong convictions and clear values relating to these roles.

The 2004 Annual Report of the City of Reykjavík addresses the current situation in relation to hot meals. "Extensions are now being added to those of the city's schools

which do not yet have catering facilities” (p. 29). Among the schools which got these provisions in the year 2004 were Krista’s (p. 57).

7.3 “I was Terrified at the Prospect of Losing my Teachers”

Halli has been a head teacher since 1993. The school was new and in a newly, rapidly growing area of the city. Even though it was difficult, he found it quite interesting and challenging to have the opportunity to shape the work in a new school. “You are the creator of everything, you are shaping the service, emphasizing what the school stands for. You are defining your boundaries, so to speak”. Before becoming a head teacher, Halli had been a school teacher for 14 years in elementary and lower secondary schools.

Halli observes that he is generally happy about the changes which he said had begun in the middle of the 1990s. He particularly mentions the middle managers and how they changed his role in a very positive way, enabling him to prioritize in a new way. He allocated responsibilities such as filling vacant teaching posts and disciplinary matters to them.

In the late 1990s there was severe teacher shortage in Iceland. This problem had been common in the rural areas for decades, but during this period the situation had spread to the city schools and culminated around the year 2000. In their sometimes desperate search for qualified teachers, municipalities tried to attract teachers by offering them various benefits such as free or cheap housing and overtime and, if the schools were located in the rural areas, all their transportation costs were covered. This tempted some of the teachers to the degree that they left their current posts. There was a time when Halli found himself under pressure from some of his teachers who told him indirectly that they did have a choice and he could therefore not take it for granted that they would stay. During this time, Halli remembers having been terrified at the prospect of losing some of his staff this way since he did not have the resources to offer any extra benefits. At the same time, he was also looking for new teachers and understandably needed to offer them something more, or different from what others were offering. Before he knew it, he found himself in a position where he was offering or even promising prospective new teachers options that were not on offer for his current staff. Halli admits to having been very uncomfortable with a situation in which he was under pressure to offer newcomers something better than members of his own staff who had remained reliable and loyal for years.

One Saturday, in a particular autumn, Halli was short of four teachers and the school year was to begin formally on the following Monday. He had been advertising for teachers and there were not many to choose from. That day, however, he hired four teachers, but as it turned out, none of them showed up. Asked why, Halli said the most likely explanation was that he had been hiring unreliable and incompetent people. In retrospect he admitted to having felt an undercurrent of doubt about their qualifications, yet not enough to stop him from taking the step of hiring them under these difficult circumstances.

Halli's narrative suggests that he was having an inner dialogue with himself at the level of *self*. Apparently he did not share the dilemma he faced, when hiring the teachers, with others. This is understandable in the light of the time-pressure, as apparently he had only that one weekend to prevent some of his pupils from being left without a teacher on their first day at school. It is also possible that because he was unsure whether the applicants were sufficiently qualified for the jobs, he did not want to discuss the issue with others. A third reason, which was not explored in the interview, is the possibility that he did in fact offer these prospective newcomers some benefits which he was not in a position to offer his current staff.

It seems as if there was a tacit agreement that even if it was not good practice, then it was at least acceptable to 'steal' teachers from other schools. Because the teacher shortage was considerable and the head teachers were, under growing pressure to start their schools on time, they were prepared to take measures which were previously not seen as acceptable. The discourse on collegiality which traditionally had prevailed among the head teachers in the city was no longer in the foreground. For a while, therefore, the situation was closer to that of the free market of supply and demand.

Some heads, like Halli, were probably caught up in a situation they did not like, that of competing with each other and using whatever legal means were available. It is therefore likely that Halli did not think he had the option of positioning himself outside this discourse.

7.4 "I Can not See I Had a Choice". Pedagogical Leader or Business Executive?

A major change which all the head teachers mentioned involved school finances. A recurring theme in head teachers' narratives was the important task of allocating money,

fairly and justly. Asi emphasized how important it had become to be knowledgeable about budgeting and have the necessary skills to plan, organize and purchase with accuracy, to check the balance regularly and, last but not least, to be accountable at every stage on every budgetary issue. He talked about the dual responsibility towards the city authorities, on the one hand, and the parents, on the other, and provided descriptive examples of demands for information from both parties, indicating their determination to hold him financially responsible. The Local Education Authorities send out a statement regularly “and if you are below zero” Asi explains, he is summoned to appear before the superintendent. According to Asi, being held totally accountable for financing of the school is, “of course, new”. This situation caused some of the most difficult dilemmas that head teachers faced. Gewirtz (2002, p. 49) points out that the extent to which an individual school is able to resist the culture of the market depends largely on its market position. An over-subscribed school is least likely to face a situation in which it needs to change what it is already doing in order to attract pupils. Where schools are unsuccessful in market terms, the potential for resistance is lowered and market-induced ethical dilemmas are therefore most pronounced (pp. 49-50). This often tough reality of the ever-changing circumstances of supply and demand has to be dealt with in Asi’s school. The previous year, Asi had just decided to spend some surplus money on an age group which he believed to be in particular need of support services. Then the environment changed suddenly.

...because I had this extra money, I decided to spend it on a group of young pupils I knew to be in need of extra care. I decided it was acceptable to spend it on them but at the same time, all of a sudden there was a 20-pupil drop in enrolment and this was something I could not have foreseen.

Losing 20 pupils meant considerable loss of income and so instead of having extra money to spend on support services for the pupils who were most in need of them, the school now had a deficit which would take a few years to bring back into balance, starting with serious budget cuts introduced that year just to make sure the debts would be paid. The ironic thing is that Icelandic teachers were on a strike for more than six weeks in autumn 2004, which meant the schools paid no wages during that time. Asi could see the humorous side of the situation: “I don’t know how this will end but I suppose the strike will come to our rescue, or more correctly, to my rescue: as I understand it, the responsibility is mine.” Asi’s difficulties had not been fully resolved at the time of the interview. The dilemma Stina described (see below), had been resolved a year previously.

Stina provided a vignette to further explain the predicament of being not only a pedagogical leader but also the financial manager of a school. Stina is a head teacher in her mid-sixties and one of the few women heads in a school which covers both levels, the elementary- and the lower secondary (for children aged 6-16) school. She had been a head teacher for ten years and, like Runa, she had spent the better part of her career as a teacher in the same school. She therefore had no prior administrative experience as a school leader. Unlike Runa, however, she had not served as a deputy with the former head teacher, a male who had just retired when Stina applied for the position. She began her time in headship with an experienced male deputy head but at the time of the interview, her deputy was a woman. Stina's 10th graders were particularly known for their excellent results in the nationally-coordinated exams at the end of compulsory education.

Referring to "the way things were", Stina remembers the times when class size was determined by the Ministry and these criteria were followed by the book. The way things were at the time of the interview, by contrast, was that the head teacher decided how many children were to make up a class at any school level. The previous year, Stina had 27 six-year-olds starting their schooling, five more than the older criteria allowed. In Stina's opinion, a group of 27 six-year olds is too large to be taught by a single teacher, but too small to justify the cost of two teachers teaching only a group of 13-14 pupils each. Consequently, she decided to keep them all in the same class, leaving her with an amount of money equivalent to one teacher's salary to meet other expenses or provide other services. Stina, explaining her decision, commented:

Well, I can't see that I had a choice, you only have a certain amount of money and in such a situation you simply have to make adjustments ...and you don't have the money it takes to have two teachers with 14 children each.

Stina's comment indicated that even though she did not perceive herself as having much of a choice she was not comfortable with the solution. In retrospect, she commented: "the way things used to be, I would never have expected one teacher to shoulder the responsibility of teaching a group of 27 six-year-olds." Asked how she felt about the decision, she said:

...well of course this is a difficult decision to make ... because I know this is bound to undermine the teaching and it may even be harmful to the pupils themselves. They do not get the same amount of attention, the teacher obviously can't attend to 27 kids as well as she/he can if there were 14.

Further probing into the reasons behind Stina's decision revealed that the year before, while she was away on a sabbatical, the school had run up a debt equivalent to over GBP 120,000. This deficit would take years to bring into balance, a process she had started upon her return. This situation put an even greater pressure on her to take every possible measure to cut, rather than increase, spending.

On this issue, Stina was predominantly involved in an inner dialogue with herself. This placed her dilemma in the arena of the *self*. Her formal authority to divide the class in two was not questioned and her teachers at the level of the *organization* would certainly have welcomed such a decision. Stina observed that some of them were in fact very annoyed with her because she decided to keep all the children in one class.

Stina's concerns appear to have been primarily pedagogical. Her account indicated that among her guiding values was care for the children, responsibility, justice, fairness and equality. She explains that she worried that the class size would limit the teacher's ability to provide each child with the necessary attention and care. The decision she took, to keep all the children in one class with one teacher, was probably against her better judgement. She was, however, determined to bring the finances back into balance and this could only be done through cutbacks in teachers' salaries. The motivational base for Stina's decision was clearly consequence-based. The rationale for the decision was the restricted budget, which had become even tighter because of the previous year's deficit. The desirable outcome would include a budgetary balance which in the long run might allow more flexibility in terms of pedagogical priorities. In the end, her decision seems to have been primarily driven by considerations of efficiency and cost-effectiveness. This places her actions in Gewirtz's cluster of "new managerialism" (Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe, 1995). Even if Stina did not see herself as having a choice because of the budget deficit, at the time, her concern for cost-effectiveness overshadowed her concern for the children who were commencing their schooling.

Stina's dilemma clearly shows what the "financial autonomy" of the schools often means in practice. Because 85-90% of the total overhead costs (operating costs) go on teachers' salaries, this does not leave head teachers many other options for saving than by making cutbacks in this area. Under these circumstances, no decision seems good, and even if Stina had wanted to let her values of care overrule her financial responsibility the problem would persist. After all, as Stina explains, she and her school would eventually have had to face up to the consequences of the extra cost of having

two classes instead of one. Such a solution would only have postponed the problem. In a system which does not have the flexibility to meet unusual circumstances such as those which came up in Stina's absence on sabbatical leave, the possibilities are limited. The school's and Stina's emphasis is echoed in the school prospectus.

The school aims to provide pupils with an environment where they can vigorously pursue an academic as well as vocational education, sports and various social activities and a close cooperation with parents.

These are said to be the core priorities in the school's policy. Further elaboration follows. The school is thus aiming to provide pupils with a learning environment "where each individual strives to study in a disciplined manner and demonstrate an ambition to excel and respect the right of others to do so in their own way". Furthermore, the educational provisions are focused on preparing the pupils to become active workers and citizens in a democratic society. This text concludes with: students are encouraged to never let go of their pursuit of further knowledge and striving for education.

The emphasis in the prospectus is reflected in the words of Binna, who has been Stina's deputy head for a few years. She talked about the emphasis on the school "as a good school, where there is ambition: our students get good grades on the nationally coordinated exams ... this is very much the spirit around here".

Stina's vignette about the 27 six-year-old children she decided to keep in one class, gains further significance in the light of the school's documentary sources. It is common knowledge, and widely accepted, that the first school year is extremely important for children's further education. This applies to what they learn, how they learn and with whom and how they communicate. Stina was undoubtedly worried that because the teacher in question was left with this many children she would not manage to make the necessary foundations for their schooling strong enough.

7.5 "People Were Used to this Respectable, Kind and Intelligent Man, a Male": Cultural Messages and Construction of Leadership Identity

Runa's appointment to a headship coincided with her fiftieth birthday, which prompted her comment: "...I wasn't exactly a child". Her original intention was to give herself ten years "and do my best, to do well on the job" and to accomplish what she saw as being

most important, or at least some of this, and then retire. These intentions changed gradually.

The first years in headship are probably never easy. For Runa they were unusually problematic. In the space of only three years, she was indicted by parents (see Chapter 8) and publicly humiliated by the superintendency (this is how she perceived the experience; see Chapter 6). Runa linked some of the difficulties she experienced in her early years as a head teacher directly to what she calls “the new reality” of schools following the 1995 Education Act and the transfer of schools from the state to the local authorities. This was a situation she described as having been “overwhelming” at times, even for those of her colleagues who had a lot of experience.

I stepped into this arena [as a head teacher] exactly as these transitions are taking place and I experienced tremendous changes in the role of head teachers. I think that from the very beginning the demands on me were quite different from those of before...

These changes which took place during her headship and also during the last years of her predecessor were “enormous” and from the beginning she felt that the demands on her were different to those made on the former head “and it was as if I was being pushed much harder [than the previous head teacher] by the parent community”.

Runa observes that she did not see this behaviour, on behalf of the parents, as disrespectful, but her reflections on her relations with them after she took on headship show that she attributed them at least partly to her gender (see Chapter 8) and her lack of authoritative behaviour in dealing with the situation.

And I am not arguing that this was done out of disrespect towards me, this is just really worth reflecting on and all these years this has regularly crossed my mind and I have thought long and hard about this...

Runa’s analysis of her encounters with parents may be correct, yet it needs to be taken further. The authoritative manner of carrying out headship is part of the current dominant discourse on educational leadership and this has gendered implications. Until the time Runa took on headship, the majority of head teachers in the city were middle-aged or elderly, authoritative males. This situation did not begin to change substantially until in the late 1990s. Runa was thus one of the first women successors of the men who were in office during this particular era. Stakeholders such as parents, city officials, teachers and pupils, and also she herself, were therefore in a position where all of them

needed to decide, and come to terms with, this new image and embodiment of women heads.

It should therefore not come as a surprise that in these first formative years, Runa experienced conflicts with stakeholders in all the administrative arenas. The nature of these conflicts, and their gravity, however, could not be easily foreseen. The conflicts Runa experienced were, in part, between the arena of *self* and the pedagogical discourse within which she had situated herself and that of the *community-culture*, where a different discourse on education and leadership was dominant (see Chapter 8). She was also negotiating with her former teacher colleagues who were now her subordinates. As a group, parents put considerable pressure on Runa, and when they acted in unison with the superintendency, as in the matter of class size, they completely overpowered her. These complicated encounters within and between all three arenas, made it necessary for her to re-evaluate whatever image she had of herself as a leader.

When Runa reflects on her own assets when taking on headship, she notes that her whole career had developed within this particular school, first as a successful teacher, then as a deputy, and “...if I may say so, I think my reputation was good”. Before becoming a head she had further established herself within the school as a deputy head for eight years. In her opinion, her relations with parents and staff alike had been pleasant, “although it was always my head teacher who was always and indisputably the authority, during those eight years [while she was a deputy] I was always just by his side and a few steps behind”.

People were used to this respectable, kind and intelligent man, a male in their minds he had been an authority figure for decades. I think that in my first years of headship people did not perceive me as being particularly authoritative.

The quotation above suggests that the cultural messages (Court, 1994; Hall, 1996; Woods, 2005) about headship, which Runa has picked up throughout her life, have conveyed an image of head teachers as male authority figures. From her point of view therefore, the dominant discourse on headship was that of a respected, male authority figure which embodied expectations which school stakeholders would not believe she could fulfill.

This may be due to Runa’s own experience as a student and later as a teacher. These messages would then have been further reinforced after she took on headship. Runa’s own leadership identity was based on what she saw as her main professional qualities,

those of a model teacher and a good colleague and co-worker. Apparently she intended to let her teaching experience inform and underpin her leadership practice but in the eyes of school stakeholders these qualities proved insufficient. She had also worked as a deputy head for many years and believed she had earned respect and trust through her work. This perception was not re-enforced by stakeholders after she took on headship.

After becoming a head teacher, Runa, therefore, needed to re-assess and re-establish the positive relations she had experienced with stakeholders in her time as a teacher and as a deputy. She needed to reconcile and find a balance between her own image of headship and that of the other stakeholders. In other words, she needed to find a way of adapting to the other stakeholders' image of leadership while attempting to shape the role in a way that she found acceptable. This proved to be far from easy.

Expert knowledge and highly-valued skills are important sources of power. It is conceivable that in Runa's construction of headship she failed to highlight these elements as important qualities for a head teacher. It is therefore possible that if Runa had managed to let her pedagogical expertise play a larger role in her construction of headship, her actions might have been questioned less. This, however, remains a speculation and it is equally plausible that the strength of the dominant discourse on leadership, which mainly emphasized qualities quite different from Runa's, might have overpowered her in any case.

However, power can rest with other and different sources (Wallace and Hall, 2003). As a head teacher, Runa unquestionably was an authority figure with the same formal authority as that of her predecessor. The difference between their statuses lay elsewhere. She was 20 years younger; she was a woman and, according to her own words, had a different approach to the job. It is possible that it was exactly because parents did not perceive Runa as being authoritative that they decided to wait until she took over to demand their rights (see Chapter 8). Such an explanation would support Runa's view that there was an undercurrent of discontent that did not surface until she took over. Another explanation could be that she did not behave as a stereotypical male head teacher would have done, taking matters in his own hands regardless of others' opinion. It is also conceivable that the mere fact that Runa was a woman meant that the parent community did not see her as an authority figure. To them, women *per se* may have been powerless subjects. Unfortunately, this is probably how Runa perceived herself in

her first years of headship, powerless and without the agency to do much except conform to the norms and standards which had already been set by external agents.

The above narrative does not describe one dilemma with clear boundaries. Rather, its general focus suggests that for Runa, not being able to establish herself on the basis of her leadership identity in the first years of headship may have had implications for the way she developed in the role. As a result of these serious conflicts, Runa was repeatedly caught up in very trying disputes and dilemmas in her first years of headship. Therefore, instead of focusing on curriculum development, the teaching and learning and taking advantage of her reputation following a long and successful career as a teacher and a relations person, she was repeatedly caught up in a web of complicated complaints and indictments which took up the better part of her time and energy.

At the time of the interview, this turmoil had been resolved and Runa says she had adjusted to the changes imposed, both by the external environment of the school and by the transition between being the deputy to becoming the head teacher in her school. Nevertheless, she admitted to not being able to prioritize her work exactly the way she would like. She had for the most part allocated her main interest, teaching and pedagogy, to middle managers, in order to devote more time to more routine chores which have become “my lot” as she expressed it. Her formulation that she had tried, but not adequately succeeded, in shaping the role to her liking, suggests that she had, at least partly, given in to the long-standing pressure of conformity from both parents and the city authorities. In light of the experience, the management side of headship seems to be predominant in her everyday practice. The other dimensions, pedagogy, teaching and learning, and leading, had mostly been allocated to others. This was probably not how Runa pictured herself when she took on headship 15 years previously. During this time much had changed and apparently Runa was more comfortable in her role now than she used to be: “I sometimes feel as if it’s only in the past 4-5 years that I’ve found myself in the role”.

7.6 “Making the World a Little Better”

It is no coincident As mentioned before, Siggi had, from the time he first entered headship, been in a position to shape his role without interference or a predecessor to measure himself against. His narrative draws attention to his unwavering enthusiasm about curriculum development and pedagogy, issues that have been closest to his heart

from the time he began his teaching career. It also suggests that, to him, being a good teacher and a good head teacher are clearly closely related. Siggi appears as a self-confident man and refers to himself as such. He is confident about his teaching skills, his detailed knowledge of his professional staff, and his creativity as a writer of curriculum material and as a change agent.

These were the qualities he believed had gained him his present authority. To him knowledge about the professional strengths and weaknesses of his staff was a major source of power. At the time of the interview, as a new head teacher in one of the largest city schools he lacked this knowledge. Whereas he knew exactly what could be expected of everyone in his earlier post he was now in the position of having to rely on others in this respect. He had the draft of the timetable in his hand while realizing, that all the knowledge about the younger children lay with one of the deputies and that about the older children lay with the other. As a new head he was in a position he described as “thinking with three heads”.

Siggi described himself as relations-oriented and saw his strongest asset as being good at human relations. The following statement indicates that his leadership identity was strongly shaped by his ability to relate to his staff on a personal basis:

... when you come in as a new member of staff/head, you make these small victories like when you can say, “Hilda” to a teacher and feel quite sure that it is in fact Hilda you are addressing...

But he was also on a kind of a mission. “I would certainly not be in this job if I wasn’t interested in making the world a little better, that is the truth of the matter...”. His perception/understanding of what makes a good (head) teacher is reflected in the following quotation:

When somebody walks up to you in Krónan [a supermarket], a woman with two small kids, smacks a kiss on your cheek and tells you that no teacher has ever equalled you this is bound to make you mellow and suggest that you did make a difference in someone’s life.

It is no coincidence that the example concerns teaching, because Siggi had always been pedagogically-minded and a great believer in the power of continual professional development. He underwent his initiation as a young man in the ministry of education in a demanding job as a writer of curriculum material in social studies. He describes the first months as a great learning experience where he learned to take criticism and learn from it. “When I began I was very self-confident but my spelling was appalling”. This

deficiency was to get him into trouble repeatedly with his colleagues and superiors: "...but I just went on writing, thinking that it was 'their' problem because I would never have coped with everything I had to do if I had been overly concerned about my spelling proficiency". Ever since, Siggi has continued reading and kept abreast with the development within the field of pedagogy. He described himself, and seems to genuinely perceive himself, as a change agent. All of this, apparently, is the essence of his own identity as a leader.

7.7 Summary

Through the reported interview data and analysis of relevant documents, this chapter explored the way in which head teachers attempted to shape their role in headship by letting their values inform their practice rather than being unilaterally shaped by the dominant discourse on their role as educational leaders. Their narratives show how they have attempted to find, or form, their identity as leaders. They offer examples of strengths they take with them into their new posts and weaknesses they have to overcome.

The chapter reveals that some Icelandic head teachers found ways of shaping their role and their work. This they did either by resisting the current educational discourse or by finding ways to adjust external demands to the needs of their schools and to their own values. There are others who felt that they tried but did not succeed and still others who tried and succeed on some occasions but not on others.

Most of the head teachers in this study had years of administrative experience, either as deputies, as heads in a different school from where they were at the time of the study, or in their present post. The same applied to the deputy heads. Some of them described how they came to construct headship as they gradually developed their leadership identity, revealing what they saw as either their main strengths on which to build, or weaknesses to work on.

Chapter 8

“The Fact that I Am a Woman May Have Been the Defining Factor”. The Impact of Gender on Headship

8.0 Introduction

When participants in the study were asked whether, and if so, how, they felt that gender had an impact on their role, all of them, women and men alike, head teachers and deputy heads, agreed that it did. They differed, however, in both the prominence they gave to their statements, their degree of elaboration on the subject and in their choice of examples to justify or support their views.

It is worth noting, however, that none of the vignettes head teachers related were overtly about gender-related issues. None of them volunteered a gender-related story or initiated a dialogue involving critical incidents they saw as gender-related. Apart from Runa, nobody mentioned gender as an influential factor in the chain of events they related. Upon probing, however, and when asked directly if gender might have mattered, many of them had stories to tell. In some instances they revealed the conviction that either their gender, the gender of others, or both in unison, were influential factors.

As mentioned earlier, even though each chapter has a particular focus, a certain amount of overlapping of subjects between chapters is unavoidable. Therefore, there have inevitably been some references to gender in the findings chapters above. In this chapter, however, the focus is on head teachers' response to questions about the possible impact of gender on headship. These are head teachers' own perceptions and understandings of gender-related incidents but not described as dilemmas. However, as the vignettes are explored, they reveal concerns that are similar to other incidents the head teachers did describe as dilemmas and they are therefore included. Three vignettes are presented in this chapter (in sections 8.3, 8.5 and 8.6); they are narrated by three heads, two women and one man. In addition to the vignettes, the chapter discusses three examples or mini-vignettes (8.1, 8.2, 8.4) told by other three head teachers, two women and one man. As mentioned before (see Chapter 5), examples are different from vignettes in that they are usually shorter and without a clear storyline. Both types of

data are important, however, which is why all the data is, whenever possible, analysed in a similar manner.

The narratives in this chapter are organized in three different ways:

a) A *vignette* from one head teacher is presented and discussed in the same manner as other vignettes in earlier chapters. This applies to the dilemmas described by Stina (8.3), Siggi, Addi (8.5) and Runa (8.6).

b) An *example* from one head teacher is presented and discussed in a similar manner as vignettes in earlier chapters. This applies to the dilemma by Gulla (8.2).

c) *Examples* from two head teachers are presented together under one heading but analysed as a whole. This applies to the first examples presented below, told by Asi and Krista (8.1) and Siggi (8.4).

Because the data in this chapter derive both from vignettes and from examples which vary in detail, scope and length, this flexibility is important because it provides the necessary means of choosing those parts of the analytical models which are most helpful.

8.1 “Technology Has Been a Handicap for me”

Gender sometimes surfaces in a particular context or when certain aspects of a head teacher’s job are being referred to, rather than being addressed specifically. This may happen in a discussion on distribution of work or on finances or, as in the example below, where both these issues lead into the area of information technology. Two contrasting views, those of Krista and Asi, are presented, preceded by a short introduction.

Discussing how she distributes work and responsibilities, Runa explains that middle managers are responsible for the pedagogical affairs in the schools “because there is all this work here on my desk and all these meetings”. In Siggi’s school, two deputy heads take full responsibility for certain tasks such as monitoring pupils’ absenteeism and filling teachers’ vacancies. He himself plays the leading role in everything related to teaching and learning. With one exception, a male head teacher is responsible for finance-related issues; these are either the head teachers themselves, male deputies or an

external agent. Asi handles financial affairs in his school but Krista allocates them to a middle manager.

Krista airs one of head teachers' common views on the importance of having the necessary autonomy to prioritize on the basis of the needs in their schools. She refers to the situation as this "blessed autonomy, financial autonomy" which schools now have and are required to adopt. "I am very dissatisfied with it, and always have been," she says, because

...the state should be responsible for the delivery of basic education for all and by this I do not mean regardless of the cost. I am more than willing to act as a responsible Financial agent but what I would prefer is being allowed to prioritize.

She admits that this new financial environment is not to her liking and is concerned that some municipalities may not have the necessary resources to run their schools, while others do. Consequently, she worries that schools' capacity to provide quality education will be unevenly distributed. Apparently, Krista expects that some aspects of this new environment are gender-related.

All I'm doing is to take money from myself, that is what the autonomy amounts to and this displeases me. Maybe it's because I'm a woman, it seems to me that the men [head teachers] are quite happy with the situation, but this also has to do with my emphasis on equality for all.

This view resurfaces in a discussion on technology and finances: "...yes, I suppose that the fact I'm a woman makes me opposed to the financial aspect and I'm not technologically minded ... Technology has been a handicap for me".

Krista explains that she was negative towards IT in the beginning and in her opinion she might have been more successful as a head teacher if she had been technologically minded. "I have noticed that my male colleagues use computers in creative ways, to document their thoughts, and do the major planning".

Why exactly Krista links technology and finances is not clear, but she heard some of her colleagues talk favorably about technological advances and how they have helped them in their everyday work. Contemporary school professionals will probably find Krista's perspective on IT old-fashioned. Nevertheless, Krista represents a large group of Icelandic women of her generation who did not see a computer until in their early forties. Many of these women have not become comfortable with using computers on a day-to-day basis, not even for the exchange of emails. Sadly, it has also taken the

younger generation of girls and women much longer than expected to acquire these skills to the same degree that young boys have. Some head teachers in this study confirmed that girls are still far behind boys in this area and Icelandic research has confirmed this (Jakobsdóttir, Krey and Sales, 1994; Jakobsdóttir, 1999a, 1999b; Jakobsdóttir, Jónsdóttir and Hjartarson, 2004).

When Asi is asked if finances takes up much of his time, he answers, “No, not really, this is not terribly time-consuming because in fact we have access to efficient tools ... which I use for regular monitoring”. But because the software does not quite meet Asi’s criteria, he has come to an agreement with the city authorities to have additional information sent to him on a monthly basis and this enables him to monitor expenses closely. “Now, I have become much more the ideological leader ... the one who takes on the leadership role... . I’m the kind of leader to a much greater degree than I used to be, I can sense that and I have the time.

Asi also uses modern technology to monitor pupil progress, misbehaviour and social problems and maintains that because of this technology he is able to monitor every incident of serious pupil misbehaviour in his school of 400 pupils. He has installed a specially-designed program for this and his secretary takes care of documenting incidents of misbehaviour or other problems reported by teachers. For Asi, one of the advantages of technology is that it saves him time which he can then spend on other issues such as curriculum and pedagogy and school development. In a similar manner, Halli, a head teacher in the largest school in the sample, particularly mentions what a change for the better electronic communication has been for him and his role. It is now often sufficient to exchange e-mails with his staff, whereas before he would have needed face-to-face meetings. Krista, on the other hand, refers to technology in a very different manner and the way she describes recent developments in technology suggests that she feels marginalized. Asi and Krista’s perspectives on IT are therefore quite different. While Krista refers to her lack of skills, in IT as a handicap, for Asi, IT is a tool that has given him more freedom and saves him valuable time that he can spend on other issues of interest or urgency, at his own choice. Because Krista does not know how to operate the software which the local authorities expect schools to use for financial monitoring, she assigns this task to others.

In an age of efficiency, speed and performativity (Guðbjörnsdóttir, 2001), IT skills have become a valuable asset. Such skills facilitate access to information which might

otherwise be either hard to obtain or take a longer time to gather and process. IT proficiency can also save time in the way Asi describes, which can then be used on other important issues. Last but not least, a certain kind of prestige and power is attached to being technologically minded and computer-literate. It appears, therefore, that while Asi is empowered by his IT skills, Krista is, if not disempowered, then at least discouraged, by her lack of them. As a result, she seems to perceive her position as being weaker than that of the colleagues she refers to. But, even if Krista is discouraged by this alleged deficiency, she does not describe her position as that of being caught up in a dilemma. She does, however, perceive herself as being marginalized in this discourse of “technical rationality” (Considine, quoted in Gewirtz, Bowe, and Ball, 1995, p. 92). This does not come as a surprise, because contemporary school leaders are expected to have harnessed information technology and integrated it into their everyday practices. For better or for worse, that is the situation in Icelandic schools. This puts even more pressure on those who do not see themselves as technologically minded.

If Krista in fact experienced conflicts because of the situation, she is most likely to have dealt with them in an internal dialogue with herself in the arena of *self*. At least the data does not indicate that she was confronted directly by either her superiors or her colleagues for lacking knowledge or skills in this area. However, this does not mean that the issue was not problematic. In addition to the potential psychological dimension of feeling inadequate, there are practical implications. In the case of Krista, she needed to hand everything computer-related over to another member of staff, and consequently had to obtain the information she would otherwise have obtained directly through an intermediary agent. This suggests an act of resignation in relation to IT, even though she commented that this did not “disempower me”. Rather than focusing on becoming computer literate (not to mention fluent in the field), she chose to delegate this part of her job to another member of staff. This enabled her to meet the requirements of implementing and using IT in her everyday practice.

Information technology and other technical skills, play a big role in the managerial ideology that shapes education and schools today (see Chapter 3 and Chapter 9, discussion). The discussion above has revolved around inanimate objects which have acquired considerable significance in the modern life of man, namely computers and information literacy. It is however not only in relation to objects but rather when communicating with people, that some of the head teachers experience their greatest

disadvantages or even discriminations for reasons of gender. Below is a narrative from Gulla which shows the ambivalent nature of her perception of gender and leadership.

8.2 “Perhaps it Is the Woman in me”

Gulla, the youngest head teacher in the group and one of the youngest in the city, answered with a definite “yes” the question of whether gender had an impact on her actions. Her initial answer was therefore no different from those of the other female head teachers. Upon further probing, however, Gulla reacted in a different manner because she neither cites gender-related incidents, nor did she give any examples of such experiences. Therefore, while admitting that gender has an impact, she was either unwilling to elaborate on this or unable to do so. Instead, she observed that her age has an impact and this was brought to her attention by remarks like “I didn’t expect such a young woman”. She was uncomfortable with statements like these and explained that she herself never thought much about either people’s age or gender. This rejection of the notion that gender had an impact on her actions and her role, suggests that Gulla’s awareness of gender related issues was subliminal regardless of her initial comment about the impact of gender.

On one occasion, however, when Gulla explained why she was “overly concerned” with staff related issues she said: “perhaps it is the woman in me,” but again without elaborating any further. Her only other reference to gender was when she volunteered the information that female teachers now are better, than those of before, at confronting each other at meetings, disagreeing and even putting up a fight but still meet in the teachers’ lounge afterwards for a friendly chat. This, to her, was not the way things used to be. The manner in which Gulla marginalized gender gains significance when it is examined in the light of what her deputy, Thura, said.

Thura recalled how astonished she was, the first time she came to the school premises and discovered how barren the area was, exclaiming “There is no school here, just moor”. And she was right: the school site was empty because the building had not even been designed. In the days to come a few houses (detached, wooden huts, used as a temporary solution) were put up on the site. These were “with an administrative area which was just fine, and three classrooms, I believe”. They were to start the school shortly, with a group of 27 children (there are now almost 400) but the classrooms were

empty, without furniture and equipment. First, however, Gulla and Thura were expected to buy the most elementary equipment. Describing the situation, Thura said:

I remember that we came here, one weekend after another, and washed [everything] the crockery and the cutlery in order to have it ready for our first staff meeting that autumn. That's just how it was.

Thura mentioned that sometimes, when minor problems came up she and her colleagues wondered whether, and if so how, men would have tackled them: "Would this issue have been raised if I had been a man? Sometimes I must admit, I doubt it". Possibly Thura and her colleagues were wondering, if for instance, a male head teacher and his staff would have taken it on themselves to do all the washing up for the first staff meeting.

Contrary to Gulla, therefore, Thura, and at least some of her colleagues, questioned whether women's ways of leading were different from those of men. "I think they are for sure," she said. To her, the most likely explanation was that men and women are biologically different. "Perhaps this is also biological". Elaborating on women's ways of leading, Thura says: "I think we [women] lead more with emotions, at least I think so, I think we most often take things more to the heart [than men do], in my opinion". Asked if she thought gender made a difference, she answered: "It's bound to, but of course one tries to base decisions on some professional premises". Thura's last comments suggest that emotions and professionalism are at two opposite ends of a continuum.

The way these women constructed their gender identity suggests that while they wondered how their male counterparts would handle the situation of dirty dishes, they did not question their approach to it. To what degree their gendered approach is based on a silent, even unconscious, consent about women's ways of leading is unknown. If it is, the same probably applies to the views of others in their environment, stakeholders in the administrative arenas of organization and community-culture who may have different expectations of men and women head teachers.

When Kata, a middle manager and twenty years senior to Thura, was asked if she thought gender had an impact on the way she carried out her work she answered:

I think about this a lot. I find it unlikely that a man would take his work home with him and continue it there outside of his normal working hours. I often do this and work at home in the evenings. My children say this is an inheritance from the past

when our dinner table was constantly covered with papers. This was the only time I had and the only place I could call my own.

Apparently, however, Kata managed to make some changes because the year before, she decided to leave any unfinished work-related business on her office desk and rather spend the evenings with her husband. This did not turn out to be problematic. Kata has noticed, however, that the younger generation of teachers view their duties differently from the way she and her generation do. Even though she thinks they sometimes went too far in counting every minute they work, she believes the overall change was for the better.

As mentioned earlier, recent research in Iceland (Guðbjörnsdóttir, 2001) shows that women leaders are often approached with different issues from those that are put before their male colleagues. Thura's experience supports this: "I think women leaders are expected to deal with different issues to those of men in management positions".

Whether Thura includes Gulla in the group of women who had been contemplating gender, is not known. The two of them work closely together, and it therefore seems unlikely that Gulla did not take part in these speculations. But whether this was the case, or not, upon probing, Gulla rejected the existence of gender related issues and thus she situated herself outside the discourse of gender and leadership. Gulla was not only the youngest interviewee but also the only woman in the group who became a head teacher before she was thirty. Taken together, her biological age, and the period she had been in headship, may explain why she did not acknowledge particular changes in her role either. As mentioned above, the current environment of Icelandic schools was the only reality Gulla knew because she had no experience of anything different.

Because Gulla did not offer gender-related examples or vignettes, and her narrative in general did not provide such insights, the discussion above does not easily lend itself to analysis with the help of administrative arenas or motives for applying particular values to a situation. It does, however, provide important insights into how one of the youngest female head teachers in the city positions herself in relation to gender and education. It also raises questions about the potential reasons for the way she chooses to position herself, and the implications of this position for her in headship. A final, remaining question, relates to the possible number of Icelandic head teachers (men and women) who share her view and in what ways this position has bearing on their leadership identity and actions as leaders in elementary schools. These questions will

not be answered here, but Gulla's contribution is nevertheless important for this examination of the impact of gender on headship. In the next section, Gulla's twenty-year older colleague, Stina, offers interesting insights which appear in striking contrast to those of Gulla.

8.3 "Well, my Dear"

When Stina was asked whether she thought gender had an impact on headship, she began with a tentative "Yes, I think it makes a difference...". She had, for instance, noticed that male head teachers seemed to attract male teachers and she had heard the rumour that young, newly graduated male teachers preferred schools with male head teachers: "They might find it more problematic to work under the management of women head teachers". Gradually, she seemed to become more convinced and said: "I'm quite sure it makes a difference. For instant I don't think the city's borough surveyors say 'hello, love' when addressing male head teachers". In her opinion they found her to be ignorant about buildings, whether talking about their interior or the exterior. As an afterthought, Stina said "I know very little about air conditioning and ventilation systems. I trust them to take care of this for me". Even if she often found them helpful, she admitted that their behaviour was unprofessional.

When probed for the possible reasons for this kind of behaviour, Stina answered:

"They are patronizing me ... I would never address anyone I don't know with the words 'well my dear' or 'OK, love'". Apparently pupils' fathers sometimes approach her in a similar manner.

The men, the fathers, are often difficult. I admit that because I expect this. I often have male teachers accompany me into meetings because I just know that some of them are thinking 'These bitches are so stupid'. I'm not going to try and change this because these might be men I meet [only] once or twice.

The above quotation suggests that Stina did not think it was either worth her time or effort to fight this kind of behavior. This might be something other women head teachers in this study faced. Another recent study of Icelandic head teachers suggests this (Guðbjornsdóttir, 2001). That study shows that even when the women object to the behavior, and are able to analyze it, as gender-related or even sexist, they seem to accept it. This may seem strange for middle-aged women with a long and successful career. It should, however be noted, that there may not be many avenues along which to take

issues of this kind any further. In Stina's case, a formal indictment would cause a lot of negative publicity, and the burden of proof would undoubtedly be heavy. Complaining about alleged macho behavior of these civil servants would thus be done at the risk of having it turned against herself. Therefore, when deciding not to do anything about the patronizing behavior of these male civil servants, Stina was avoiding taking steps which could have led to personal antagonism, which again might harm the school. Rather than risk bad relations with these men, and possibly more of their colleagues as well, she took no action. The same applies to her decision to take male teachers with her into meetings. Instead of confronting the fathers who abuse her verbally, she had a man accompany her, hoping his presence would spare her further unpleasantness. This suggests that she had reached a point of resignation in her effort to try to change men's behaviour towards her. Therefore, rather than waste her time and energy on fighting windmills, she resorted to measures which minimized the impact of the situation on her daily practice. After all, as she said herself, she might only meet these men once or twice and could hardly be expected to make such impact on them that they would change their views or behaviour. On the surface, therefore, Stina acts undisturbed, whereas in reality she positions herself outside the patronizing male-made discourse and subordination of women.

The conflicts Stina is describing involve relations with respected, high-ranking, civil servants working for the city of Reykjavík, representatives from the arenas of *community-culture*. They also involve agents from another group within this same arena: the parents, and more specifically, the fathers. What is particular about these conflicts is that, by Stina's choice, they are not openly dealt with but, rather contemplated and come to terms with, by Stina herself and possibly a colleague, although this was not mentioned. Stina's prime motivation is apparently consensus and therefore she avoids 'rocking the boat' to maintain good relations with stakeholders from these arenas, at least on the surface. As already explained, Stina believed this to be in the best interests of the school. Stina is thus prepared to be insulted and, in her own words, patronized personally while serving as head if it can benefit the school at large. She is describing a masculine discourse, dominated and maintained by male officials. Stina seems to situate herself quietly within it rather than disturbing the equilibrium.

Two of the deputies specifically mentioned the behaviour they had experienced from fathers in meetings with their head teachers. Gudda, Gunna's head teacher, comments: "The way some of the men behave at meetings with my head teacher is not acceptable. I

doubt they would behave like this if the head teacher were male.” Gudda pointed out that these issues, involving the participation of pupils, parents and teachers, were often the most difficult: “They are very trying, they tear you apart.” For women, behaviour like Stina and Gudda described can put the women head teachers in a particularly weak position and disempower them in situations when having authority is of paramount importance.

On the same issue, Binna, Stina’s head teacher, mentions that “I was rather insulted, on behalf of my head teacher, by how a father talked about her. Binna had been talking to the wife of the man in question, to set up a meeting with both of them because of their child’s disciplinary problems. When the wife had heard her out she said: “My husband told me that this matter would never have been allowed to go this far if the head teacher had been a man”. The issue involved a teacher and the child of these parents. According to Binna, the underlying assumption was that a male head teacher would either have fired the teacher in question or at least told him off in front of the child and the parents. To Binna, however, this was absurd and she doubts that a male headteacher would have behaved much differently from how her female head teacher did in this particular matter. Stina’s dilemmas, as well these, and other examples from school leaders like Binna and Gudda, suggest that Stina’s experience is far from being exceptional.

8.4 “They Definitely Did not Want a Woman for the Job”

Siggi describes two gender-related, yet different circumstances, in relation to his headship aspirations. His first serious thoughts about becoming a school administrator had been prompted about 30 years earlier while he was still a young teacher. For some time it looked as if he would be a candidate for the position of headship in one of the largest city schools. Had he gone forward, the choice would have been between himself and a colleague, a woman of his age, “and all the women who taught at the elementary level supported me”. When he learned who his opponent was he decided to withdraw his application and informed the other candidate of his decision. He told her that he was not interested in what he called “cock- fighting” and had decided instead to support her in her aspirations for the position. Even if the city had not publicly stated any gender preferences, he believed that there was a general agreement to vote for teams of a man and a woman. His female colleague therefore had a head start. The second element in her favour was her time in post: while Siggi had only been teaching at the school for one year, she had been there for years. Siggi sat down with Vala (the applicant for the

post) and told her: “The city cannot by-pass a woman, I am sure of that”. Siggi immediately told his fellow teachers about his decision and was met with irritation from the women, both overtly and covertly.

Now, almost 20 years later, Siggi has only recently taken on a new job as a head teacher in one of the larger city schools. In the years in between, he had, as mentioned before, been a head teacher in a rural village, and for the previous 10 years in one of the city schools. It was not Siggi who took the first step in relocating to another school; rather, he was contacted by representatives of the school who encouraged him to apply for the job. When asked why he thought the staff saw him as an eligible candidate he replied:

In my opinion the main reason they [the staff] encouraged me to apply [for headship] was the fact that I’m male but not necessarily because they had heard about my many qualifications ... the staff made it quite clear to me that they definitely did not want a woman for the job.

Siggi was outspoken about the impact his gender had on his career aspirations from very early on. He seemed to be a proud man who was annoyed by the fact that his ‘other’ qualities, those he himself values the most, are overlooked by what he sees as essentialistic views on gender. As listed before, among his qualities were his knowledge and experience as a writer of curriculum, his record as a successful teacher and his knowledge of pedagogy. Last but not least, he saw himself as a change agent who has good people skills. Possibly Siggi did not acknowledge that reports of these qualities of his may have spread to the school in question. Summing up this, and related experiences, he said:

Yes, well, I am quite self-confident and don’t try to hide it but it’s often been my feeling that at the end of the day, being male was the determining factor for being elected for this or for that, if for no other reason than to make sure that a woman would not get the post, and this I find intolerable.

Siggi believes that women often position themselves against women out of jealousy. “Women are women’s worst enemies, this is my experience after having belonged to a women’s profession for an awfully long time”. An additional element is the dominant discourse on headship which still reflects the view that women are aggressive but men are decisive. This, Siggi argued, comes as much from women as it does from men. Because of this Siggi commented: “I think we have to be extremely careful about the messages [on gender] we send our young people...it is so common to choose a man just because he is male.

At the end of the interview, as if the discussion had become too gloomy, Siggi stood up and declared with a broad smile: “Yes, women are better than men, no I mean men are better than women....”!

Siggi’s experience, as related above, resonates with that of his much younger colleague, Addi. Therefore, rather than examining Siggi’s case separately, Addi’s situation will be discussed next, with links between the two where appropriate.

8.5 “Everybody Always Remembers your Name”

When Addi was asked if he thought gender had an impact on him and his role he said: “I’m not sure...well it definitely influenced why I came here [to his present headship] so early”. When Addi elaborated on the events leading up to his present post, it became apparent that he realized long since that sex and physical appearance are not neutral attributes in a person’s life.

As Addi reflected on his career he recalled that during his years in teachers’ college, he for some reason served on almost every committee and board possible “and it was not because I was pushing myself forward ...because I don’t think I have that in me, but it seems to me that attention was somehow drawn towards me”. Later, when visiting his old teachers’ college to ask for someone at the reception desk, he found it remarkable that all the clerks always remembered his name. Addi seems to fully acknowledge that the reason was, that he belonged to the small contingent of men, about 10% of the total, who were trainee teachers while he was studying. “Everybody knows instantly who I am and can address me by name, when I visit 10 years later.” He attributes this to the fact that “one stands out”. Whether or not Addi had this gender awareness while he was in teachers’ college is unknown. It is however clear, that in retrospect, when Addi critically examined the development of his career, he acknowledged the impact of gender, particularly in other people’s stereotypical reaction to an aspiring male teacher and head teacher. This experience is likely to have followed him into headship and, at least partly, shaped his leadership identity.

While gaining the trust of fellow students, and being recognized and remembered years after graduating, can hardly be seen as causing a dilemma for a young man but it has obviously made Addi alert to gender related issues throughout his career, as a teacher, deputy head and now as head teacher. For Addi who appears as a thoughtful and reflective man, this experience may, however, not necessarily have been flattering.

Because Addi saw through the situation and attributed it, at least partly, to his gender, he may not even have given himself the credit he had, in reality, earned. Therefore, this is a situation which was likely to cause inner conflicts, conflicts of the *self*, where questions about his own worth versus the ‘merit’ of his gender were raised. Even though Addi did not share any concrete experiences of gender-related dilemmas he had dealt with in post, he readily admitted to the possible impact of gender on his headship. He also shared his views on the differences he found that women and men teachers brought into their teaching, without wanting to assert that they were caused by their gender. For instance, he mentioned how tricky it can be to work, and lead, in a female dominated workplace because the discussions were “of course” different and approached differently [compared with a male approach] and “there are times when one finds that matters are discussed more than is strictly necessary ...but this is just something you learn...”. He also found that the women are very gentle, perhaps a little too gentle when it comes to discipline: “...we, the men, are more forceful”. As an afterthought though, he said this may not have been due to gender but to character, and concluded: “What I need is more decisive people, and as I’ve said, it may have nothing to do with gender...”. Addi admitted that because of this he had put some effort into trying to attract male teachers to the school with the aim of not losing the male teachers he already had because “of course, their perceptions are similar to mine”.

On the issue of women teachers, Baddi, Runa’s deputy, expressed himself in a similar way to Addi. When discussing disciplinary problems and actions in his own school, he described how he was often asked to step in and help [the women] out when they could not cope with difficult boys. “They often come to me. Because women perhaps, as they sometimes admit themselves, sometimes talk about things little bit too long, instead of perhaps to taking action”. In his opinion the latter approach, (less talking and more action) gives children a clearer message about what is acceptable and what is not.

The way Addi expressed himself on gender did not align him to the discourse of the current stereotypical views on masculine leadership. When he took on his present headship, he was faced with a considerable deficit. He soon realized it would take both time and effort to analyse the situation and find a workable solution. Even though this was a troubling situation, he decided not to prioritize this pressing issue in his first year in headship. Instead he focused on relations, getting to know the people, staff and students and their work. Similarly, when he thought that one of his teachers was being harassed by parents (see Chapter 6), he went to great lengths to protect the teacher from

harm. This turned out to be a very difficult and long-lasting problem but he seemed never to waver in his decision to stand by the teacher. His views are even further removed from the hegemonic leadership of managerialism (see Chapter 3) with its emphasis on effectiveness, performativity and rational technology, which permeates that ideology (Gewirtz, 2002; Guðbjörnsdóttir, 2000; Coleman with Lumby, 2007). On the contrary, Addi is an example of a young, contemporary educational leader who is enacting and expressing a masculinity of his own (Connell, 1995).

Addi's narrative (above), suggests that he did not accept uncritically the numerous direct messages he received early on about his worth in the eyes of others. On the contrary, he seemed to have reflected critically on these messages in order to understand their true meaning in relation to his own worth as a human being, not 'just' as a male. Siggi, who is Addi's senior by 20 years, (see above), was even more outspoken than Addi about the way gender can impact on career aspirations. He described how "intolerable" he found it to be prioritized over a woman for the sole reason that people did not want a woman for the job. Siggi's stories resembled those told by highly attractive women who complain about never being taken seriously because of their beauty. It is possible, however, that Addi and Siggi represent a growing number of men who question their dominant status and are willing to take a stance and look for ways of abolishing it. As head teachers they are certainly in a position to make a difference by making gender the focus of attention in everything that the school stands for.

8.6 "The Fact that I Am a Woman May Have Been the Defining Factor". Authority Questioned

Vignettes by Runa have already been discussed earlier in the thesis. On the issue of gender, Runa provided the only holistic narrative amounting to a value-related dilemma. When she discussed the events, the issue of gender was, however, not predominant; rather, it surfaced in the course of the dialogue about the incident and its aftermath.

As mentioned before, Runa became a head teacher in 1994 after having been a deputy head for several years. There were grade levels which had never received the prescribed hours in subjects such as home economics and swimming, the rationale being that dividing the class in half offered higher-quality teaching, even if it meant fewer contact hours. As far as Runa knew, parents had never complained to her predecessor about the situation.

Apparently, parents had ignored the situation for years but during this transition period while I was taking over from my predecessor, parents' councils were established by law and their first action after I became head teacher was to complain formally ...this ended with formal indictment in the spring.

This happened even though Runa and her deputy had explained that all decisions regarding the winter ahead had already been made by the former head teacher and changing them in the middle of winter would upset the working arrangements for the whole calendar year. A second, related, problem was the budget: the amounts which the previous head teacher had saved through this arrangement had, understandably, been spent on other services in the school. Cutting them would cause difficulties and complaints from all of those it might affect, mainly the teachers.

When Runa was asked whether she thought her gender may have played a role in the way parents approached her she admitted to having thought "a lot about this, whether possibly the fact that I'm a woman may have been the defining factor. ...After all, I wasn't exactly a teenager. I was just about to turn 50". As an afterthought, Runa added: "This is probably a little typical of the things I got into; this is not the only incident but certainly the most serious one".

Looking back to the events leading up to the indictment, Runa admitted that she and her senior managers could possibly have been more decisive and thus more readily accommodated parents' wishes at an earlier date, but "we didn't have the courage, I can easily admit this now, we didn't venture to confront our own people. We should have been a little more radical...". Here, she was referring to the teachers, her former colleagues but current subordinates, who would now be having 30 students in their classes instead of 15, a reality they had never faced in their careers. Within the micro-environment of the school, this was the group she needed to negotiate with under pressure by parents, on the one hand, and the new legal environment on the other. Runa found it likely that even though people had not stepped forward and complained earlier, they probably felt that it was high time "to tidy things up," and that there was an undercurrent of discontent among parents who had chosen not to confront her predecessor.

Runa's dilemma and her own analysis of the events leading up to her indictment suggest that she was trying to accommodate the views and demands of stakeholders with very different interests: her teachers, on the one hand, and the parents, with the support of the educational authorities, on the other. Apparently she found herself in a particularly

difficult position in relation to her own staff, her former fellow teachers, who were suddenly being required to change their practice from what they had been accustomed to. Their voice was probably stronger and had more impact upon her decision than those of others, even to the point of clouding her own judgement. After all, Runa knew the law required her to take action and therefore the parents were in the right in demanding changes. Her words about not being “radical enough” indicate that she acknowledged this, while hoping that parents would accept a gradual change instead of instant action. The pressure from teachers becomes even more understandable in light of what her deputy, Baddi, said, describing the professional staff as being extremely headstrong and used to having their way.

In this critical incident, Runa’s motivation was consensus-based. She was preoccupied with peer pressure and conformity to groups and she readily justified her actions both with reference to what was best for her students and her staff (Hodgkinson, 1978, 1991). On this issue, Runa situated herself within the professional and pedagogical discourse of teaching and learning. She made a priority of what was best for her students while trying to keep up good relations with teachers and parents alike through her consultative mode of approaching the problem. Her emphasis on the human element of leadership, relations, pedagogy and democratic procedures was at odds with the dominant educational discourse which was being restructured so as to fit in better with the ideology of managerialism and technical rationality (Blackmore, 1998). This ideology was based on different values, which parents may have been more closely aligned with. The most prominent of these were efficiency, effectiveness and performativity, all of which have been found to reflect the current hegemony of particular kinds of masculine values. The first emphasizes getting the money’s worth, the second, getting it without delay, and this implies constant monitoring and regulating.

The school’s website offers detailed lists of information about after-school care, school-home relations, important dates and the school canteen, and also an interesting text on the school’s history (as one of the oldest schools in the city). There is, however, no school prospectus, but the section “The Policy of the School” lists the main objectives of the school, such as “to encourage pupils to lead a healthy life and respect their environment”. Under the heading “What’s special about us” it is pointed out that the school stands out for its age, being in an old and developed area where old traditions and innovations are in a constant dialogue.

While every effort is made to maintain the best of the working traditions and relations which have developed and established themselves throughout the years, it is seen as equally important to adopt and implement pedagogical and instructional innovations.

The above quotation is interesting in the light of Runa's dilemmas during her formative years as a head teacher. In her long career as a teacher in the school, she had contributed to the development of what is now seen as "working traditions and relations". Undoubtedly there were, at the time of the incident, and still are at the time of writing, many advocates for the way things were, both among parents and teachers. On the other hand, there were things and work procedures that needed to be changed, and as a head teacher, Runa was expected to implement them, not incrementally, as she would have liked to do, but instantly. As mentioned above, this requirement by the parents and the educational authority, to act at once, may, in part, have been caused by a growing impatience for change in the years leading up to her headship.

8.7 Summary

In this chapter the head teachers either responded to direct questions about the possible impact of gender on headship or volunteered such information. Their statements present the head teachers' own perceptions and understandings of gender-related incidents, which they do not describe as dilemmas. However, as the vignettes are explored they reveal concerns that are similar to other incidents the head teachers have described as dilemmas. The narratives offer different perspectives and experiences of these head teachers in relation to their gender, that of others or the gendered discourses they were facing. Some of the experiences may have benefitted the head teachers, but others suffered because of them.

Chapter 9

Discussion

9.0 Introduction

In the previous four chapters, the main findings of this study were reported and discussed. They suggest that the environment of Icelandic schools has changed considerably in recent years, away from predominantly pedagogical concerns towards a more market-driven, competitive environment. This has increased the scope and changed the nature of the head teacher's role. In those chapters, several dilemmas that head teachers have dealt with in relation to those changes are discussed. Head teachers' dilemmas reflect the personal values on which they base their decisions and the motivations behind them. The findings indicate that even if female and male head teachers share a similar value base, women's position is in many ways unequal to that of the men.

The main purpose of this research was to shed light on the interplay between values, gender, and leadership behaviour, within the micro- and macro environment of schools. In this chapter, therefore, the findings are tied together and further highlighted in light of these two perspectives, the educational environment and its gendered implications.

The chapter is divided into two main parts. The first half of the chapter primarily discusses the findings with respect to new services such as day care and catering services. In that part, *The Re-Structuring of Schools*, I attempt to highlight the current situation and the main changes leading up to it. I moreover try to interpret and shed light on the main implications of those changes for the role of the head teacher. In the latter half of the chapter, *Gendered Implications of Change*, I focus on the gendered dimension of change and discuss the various implications those changes can have on head teachers. I particularly examine the impact of those changes on the female heads because research has shown (see chapters 2 and 3) that the dominant educational and leadership discourse has many characteristics that are seen as stereotypically masculine.

9.1 The Re-Structuring of Schools

This emphasis of technical rationality is upon the development of techniques, procedures and organizational practices which are intended to facilitate speed of decision making, coordination, the setting and reviewing of objectives, good financial controls and information, cost improvement, responsiveness and consumer loyalty

(Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe, 1995, p. 92.).

As has been established, the changed environment of schools has not only increased the scope of the head teacher's role, but also its nature. Those changes have sometimes required knowledge and skills that the head teachers do not possess, yet are expected to perform. More important, though, are changes in educational policy, away from educational and social considerations and towards a more market-driven and commercial emphasis. In the above quotation, Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe (1995) capture the multiple implication of this dimension in the professional life of Icelandic head teachers.

This research is set against the recent re-structuring of schools in Iceland and beyond. Those changes were discussed earlier in the thesis, in chapters 2 and 3. The findings of the study suggest that in the past 10-15 years, Icelandic head teachers have been experiencing a situation that amounts to an innovation overload. This includes information technology, financial autonomy, and the inclusive school, catering services, the self-evaluation of schools, differentiated learning, and after-school activities. Maggi, who is Siggi's deputy, recalls the early days after the municipalities took over the schools from the state. The number of innovations that schools were expected to participate in was "absolutely ridiculous" causing a lot of frustration in the schools. Everything was to be implemented instantly, which proved to be as impossible under the municipalities as it had been under the state.

We have gone too far in trying to change everything [simultaneously], we have a tendency to do this, but we have to be careful and stop now and then to ask ourselves what is already being done well and what needs to be changed.

This situation soon changed, as local education authorities seemed to realize that this approach to change was unrealistic and unlikely to pay off. The organizational hierarchy has moreover been altered to make room for middle managers, a new profession in the school, and groups of unskilled staff such as teachers' assistants (see chapter 1).

Those various changes can be roughly divided into two categories. First, there are services that are sometimes referred to as primarily custodian, such as day care, recreational activities and hot meals. Such activities are mostly provided by unskilled staff that now makes up almost 1/3 of the total staff of schools. Second, there are new roles that require new knowledge, skills and competencies, such as financing and information technology, which are often collectively called technical skills. Those changes, as mirrored in policy documents and public discourse, have often required head teachers to ask themselves to what degree their values are aligned to them. Many of those changes have already been discussed earlier in the thesis, but some of them are further highlighted below in relation to their implications for the role of head teachers.

9.1.1 An Autonomous or a Disempowered Leader?

Head teachers' and deputies' descriptions of the recent re-structuring of education show that autonomy, the watchword of the day, is, like Thor mentioned, "under heavy monitoring". Ideologies and work procedures are developed and disseminated centrally in a manner that indicates centralizing tendencies, which go against the popular public policy to grant schools professional and financial autonomy. Moreover, some of the requirements are targeting programmes similar to those that are already in place in schools, which seemingly serves the purpose of conformity. However, as this study shows, head teachers were opposed to being required to replace what they saw as perfectly good ideas or instruments with others that were centrally disseminated or even imposed. Developing their own approaches and procedures was often a long, yet rewarding process, which called upon the extended participation of personnel. This, again, gave people a sense of accomplishment and ownership.

Throughout the school year, one or more schools in the city have launched new projects which have been introduced or promoted by the municipality. Runa recalls various questionnaires inquiring into participation in popular projects. The so-called autonomy is thus always coupled with monitoring from at least two sides: education authorities and parents. Asi points out that in some instances parents are asked what they think of services even when it is common knowledge that they are not being offered within the schools in question. In his opinion this is a clever, but rather transparent, way to put pressure on the schools in question to speed up preparation for whatever services are under scrutiny. In the current market-driven environment of schools, parents define themselves as consumers who are entitled to services, while the municipality, as a monitoring agent on behalf of the state, tries to make sure that those are being provided

by the schools. This has resulted in a situation where schools are being held accountable for everything from teaching to day care. Head teachers' dilemmas indicate that because parents can usually rely on the municipality to support their claims, the schools are under considerable pressure to conform.

The demand for new services and changed work procedures has had both practical and professional implications. In practical terms, such a situation can be overwhelming because of its complexity and scope. In professional terms, changes upon changes are likely to cause anxiety and stress that slow down, or even stop, the process of implementation. Even at the best of times, when people welcome change, they cannot try them out, reflect on them, adjust to them and successfully implement them at such a fast rate (Dalin, 1995; Hargreaves, 1999; Sergiovanni, 2001; Schön, 1987; Stoll and Fink, 1997). Bearing in mind that most of those changes have their origin and are developed outside of schools, the professional staff at the schools may not always have accepted them with enthusiasm. Moreover, a change may be welcomed, yet the way it is presented and implemented may be opposed. Contemporary professional staffs rarely accept new ideas at face value, but expect to be involved in the process of evolving and developing ideas and procedures as equal partners in a democratic process. The Icelandic head teachers frequently made comments about contradicting messages regarding autonomy versus surveillance. Some also pointed out that the so-called autonomy applies when it suits authorities, but when it comes to the most difficult issues, like provisions for children with severe mental problems, there is neither interest in target-setting nor monitoring. Those, they say, are the most difficult, time consuming and heartbreaking issues, and with those they are left on their own. On more than one occasion the head teachers expressed being irresolute and disempowered by not having the means to provide a safe environment for their students and staff. Some of those incidents were discussed earlier, for instance the examples shared by Haddi, Stina and Addi, and comments by deputies like Thura, Baddi and Maggi.

It is almost as if the alleged financial autonomy of schools relieves the LEAs of their duty to make provisions for children with the greatest need. This is, however, only partly true because in practice, *autonomy* means that schools are responsible for finding solutions for every child, without exceeding their budgets, and education authorities have a supervisory role in making sure they do. The main problem, as Haddi pointed out, is that there is no longer an administrative level to which head teachers can turn for assistance in such difficult cases. After the municipalities re-structured their educational

hierarchy some years ago, it is as if a link is missing in the provision of resources and professional advice. The main rationale for this part of the re-structuring was the alleged autonomy of schools which made them fully accountable for finding solutions as well as financing those provisions.

It is precisely here, where fiscal and pedagogical concerns meet, that the competing values of stakeholders most often surface. In those new circumstances, while facing new demands, the head teachers have had to re-evaluate their position, their vision and the underpinning values upon which they have founded their ideas and their identity as qualified contemporary leaders. This study suggests that often their ideas and their values were in conflict with those of their environment.

9.1.2 A Custodian or a Pedagogical Leader?

Among the new services most often mentioned by head teachers is the provision of hot meals at noon. Their comments about the catering services suggest their prevalent ambivalence towards making schools responsible not only for producing hot meals but also for many of the services that are often referred to as primarily custodian. The reasons vary from concerns about how time consuming they are, to ideological opposition to the notion that it is the schools' role to provide those and related services. Sometimes the two views merged, and interviewees expressed opposition to the implementation of those services only to the extent that they take up valuable time from other duties they perceive as being of greater importance. The head teacher who expressed the strongest conviction in those terms was Krista.

What makes such services quite delicate and extra burdensome is that while it is extremely difficult to get qualified staff for those jobs, parents are much more likely to question those services and intervene in their delivery than in the actual teaching and learning. Parents require information about the running of the kitchen and if they foresee a profit from it they want to have a say as to what is done with it. Asi talks about dual responsibility, towards local authorities on the one hand and the parents on the other. If something is not to the parents' liking, such as the menu, the food or the staff, they are quick to complain to the local education authorities. Here, as elsewhere, the declared financial autonomy of the school is restricted by other school stakeholders. This part of schools' daily activities is therefore carefully monitored, which further increases the pressure on schools to provide high quality services in those areas.

There is also a side to the provision of those services that rarely gets mentioned: the impact they can have on teaching and learning. First, because of the urgency of those services, professional, highly qualified staff like head teachers or deputies spend long hours answering phone calls and solving disputes rather than attending to issues that concern teaching and learning, curricular planning or meetings with colleagues (Hansen, Jóhannsson, Lárusdóttir, 2004). Many of the head teachers remark on and complain about this aspect of the issue. Second, many of the schools were not designed for those kinds of services and therefore there are instances where the delivery of food into classrooms at set hours of the day takes priority over teaching. For instance, Baddi, one of the deputies, points out that subjects like arts and crafts and home economics were often taught at noon, but this has now become impossible. In order to secure 400 children a 20-minute slot in this period, they are placed under the supervision of their homeroom teacher inside their regular classrooms. Head teachers' comments and examples suggest that they are often torn between the many different duties they are expected to fulfil, while not having the necessary resources, such as staff or facilities, to carry them out. Some have been reluctant to implement those new services. As already mentioned, their rationale has either been based on ideological grounds, such as Krista's, or on practical grounds, such as when the school buildings have not been designed with those services in mind, as in the instance of Runa and Baddi's school (above).

Difficulties in relation to unskilled staff continue. On August 20, 2007, *Fréttablaðið*, Iceland's most widely-read newspaper, interviewed some of the city's head teachers, inquiring into the situation concerning staffing at the start of a new school year. All reported that they were still short of staff. A few teachers were still badly needed, but the overwhelming worry was the shortage of unskilled staff, mainly teachers' assistants. A head teacher in one of the newest schools was quoted as saying, "In my opinion it is the day care which is the biggest problem ... there is a shortage of staff in all the schools". This indicates that the situation concerning unskilled staff, as described in this thesis, in the early days or 3-4 years ago, has not changed for the better.

9.1.3 An Inclusive or a Selective School

According to head teachers, the policy of the inclusive school has proved difficult beyond description for many schools. Even if no one openly opposes the ideology, it may merely be because it would be seen as politically incorrect. A second reason may be head teachers' sincere wish to secure every child equal access to mainstream, quality

education within the public school system. Such a vision can, however, only be carried out successfully through great financial expense and with the help of qualified staff. Yet the problems rarely involve disabled students – those who are physically or mentally disabled. Special teachers and support officers, in cooperation with the teachers, usually manage to provide those children with the specialized care they need in the public schools. The problems are caused by the growing number of children with severe psychological and disciplinary problems, children whose behaviour is disturbing to teachers and students alike. Head teachers and their deputies give examples of what they see as the general lack of resources for those children. Many of those children have mental problems and are not only disruptive but also a threat to other students and staff. The head teachers and deputies see this as one of the most serious weaknesses of contemporary schooling. The deputy Thura talks about the growing pressure on schools in relation to student behaviour, and comments that “Nonni is required by law to attend the school ... and we are just expected to provide him with an education, no matter what, because the parents have become more conscious about their rights and more demanding”. Many of the head teachers gave examples of dilemmas that involve difficulties due to the general lack of resources for these children. Three dilemmas of this nature, outlined by the head teachers Addi, Haddi and Stina, are discussed in this thesis. There were, however, others whose accounts were not included, such as that of Asi, who discussed a situation with a group of teenage boys who not only stole from their schoolmates but also broke into the homes of their teachers. He was required to keep them in the school because no other solutions were available, but he refused. Maggi, one of the deputies, also talked about the “general lack of resources” for those children.

In August 2007, the head of the newly elected Education Council of Reykjavik announced that the agency had just developed new regulations that schools should apply in relation to disciplinary actions. With “new coordinated processes, head teachers will find it easier to expel students with severe behavioural problems from schools”. (Fréttablaðið, August 21, 2007). This, however, is forbidden unless other more appropriate provisions for the student have already been made. Not a word was said about those provisions, neither what they might be nor, more importantly, who would or should provide them. Those who might have hoped for resources or help in solving those problems will probably have been disappointed.

This situation has given rise to a multiplicity of conflicts where contradicting discourses compete for recognition. On the one hand there are head teachers' pedagogical concerns and values, which highlight the importance of equality and equal access of all children to education. To this end the head teachers try to run inclusive schools while maintaining secure and harmonious working relationships. The schools do, however, not have the necessary resources to meet the needs of the most disturbed children. Therefore, head teachers who want to make the necessary provisions for the children do not find such solutions within their present situations.

When head teachers situations are considered in light of Begley's administrative arenas, they are, on the one hand, subjected to inner conflicts in the administrative arena of *self* as they try to come to terms with a situation that often seems unsolvable. On the other hand there are the parents and the municipality at the level of *community-culture* who demand that schools fulfil their duties and provide whatever services they are required to provide, to all children. Those demands further complicate matters for head teachers who are caught in conflicting demands within themselves as well as with their environment. One of the pressing issues that head teachers are dealing with is how to ensure the rights of individual children without imposing on the rights of the group.

9.1.4 New Services, Old Perspectives. Competing Discourses

The questions raised above concern the most fundamental issues of contemporary schooling. They involve both the kind of services rendered and who should provide them. Is the school predominantly a pedagogical institution, emphasizing teaching and learning, or should it offer other provisions, such as day care and hot meals? Is the school open only to those children who can benefit from mainstream education, or is it for all children, regardless of their particular needs? These questions have already been answered by policy makers at the municipality and state levels, in Iceland and elsewhere. A part of the problem is that policy makers and educational staff do not necessarily meet one another eye-to-eye. It appears that the reason for not putting the policy into practice is more practical than ideological, or what the professional staff see as a lack of resources, making it impossible for them to implement the policy.

It would seem that the arrival of middle managers, which almost coincided with the implementation of new services, should have gone a long way in bridging the gap of increased workload between old and new services. This, however, is not supported by the data. One of the reasons may be that there already was an accumulated management

deficiency. While middle managers may have been able to take the top off that iceberg, they may not have been able to do much beyond that. It is also possible that authorities failed to analyse the situation in schools in terms of manpower and thus could not foresee how difficult it would be to find qualified staff for the new services. In an attempt to analyse the situation, Siggi comments that when the new power hierarchy was implemented in schools it was done without the necessary time for schools to prepare, plan and look for ways in which this additional workforce might best be utilized. In light of the alleged innovation overload mentioned above, Siggi may have hit the nail on the head.

The accounts by head teachers in this research suggest that they are all pedagogically focused and see teaching and learning as the core of the school. In this light it is not surprising that some of the head teachers, as well as the deputies, question the provision of many of the new services that they see as outside the realm of schooling. This view is further strengthened by the fact that many of the schools have not been built with those services in mind, to say nothing of the prevailing lack of staff. Limited resources for mentally and emotionally disturbed children has also made it difficult to ensure the safe and encouraging, student-friendly environment those head teachers value so highly. Taken together this means that it has become increasingly difficult for the head teachers to prioritise in favour of teaching and learning.

Parents have also become much more influential in school affairs than they used to be. It is likely that neither they, nor head teachers and teachers, have quite worked out how to work productively together. For instance, a recent Swedish study showed that school leaders talk little about their relationship with the parents, and when they do, “they position themselves as chiefs in command of parents” (Franzén, 2006, p. 11.).

Both head teachers and deputies discussed the new services, and many had been apprehensive of them from the time they were first introduced. As mentioned before, their reasons vary from ideological opposition to concerns about the extra time they would require. Those two perspectives are sometimes intertwined because the time spent on extra services has tended to take time from those that were already in place, mainly curriculum development and other issues relating to teaching. In light of the above it is worth a thought whether Krista, in her long-standing resistance to take up catering services, foresaw what an enormous addition in time and manpower this would be and at what cost it would come. It is, however, important to note that the views of

this particular group of head teachers may gradually disappear with new generations of educational leaders who see it as their role to make all the necessary provisions for children within the schools. They may not question the importance of serving hot meals or providing various after-school activities, but rather see them as important in terms of providing quality education. It is also possible that by then the schools will be better equipped to make those provisions without disturbing teaching related activities.

Iceland is operating in a policy context which is similar to much of the Western world and is acting almost like a microcosm of it. This means that changes in policy and practice which originate elsewhere, usually find their way to Iceland. However, often times this happens later in Iceland than elsewhere. Most of the new services discussed above, which Icelandic schools have only recently taken on, have been an integral part of schooling in Iceland's neighbouring countries for years. Even if those changes are considerable it is probably not their scope but rather the speed with which they have been implemented that has caused the most turbulence in Icelandic schools. Earlier comments from the heads Asi, Haddi and Siggi, and from deputies like Maggi, suggest this. The economic expansion of the Icelandic labour market has also had considerable impact in the schools. This situation has made it extremely difficult to find qualified personnel to work in the schools because they choose other, often better paid, work. The difficulties and dilemmas those changes have caused may therefore gradually disappear when this intermediate phase is over and head teachers, as well as other school personnel, have adopted, implemented and institutionalised those changes.

9.2 Gendered Implications of Change

Changes in educational policy are far from being gender neutral, a perspective which was outlined in chapter 2. The gendered implications of change, however, are rarely highlighted. This applies to the recent re-structuring of education in Iceland, where the concept gender is rare in policy texts. Research in Iceland, for instance, has shown that the 1999 National Curriculum is predominantly aimed at preparing pupils for public life (Guðbjörnsdóttir, 2003). Magnúsdóttir sees this as an indication of masculine criteria where the public dimension is favoured over the private (2005, pp. 158-161). The teaching, however, is said to involve the interior: self-knowledge, relations, creativity and lifestyle, and the exterior: society, environment, nature and culture. Gender is never referred to directly and the author takes this as an indication of how gender neutral the text is and how little attention is paid to the sphere of the interior. Similarly, the head

teachers who participated in this study did not seem to be aware that the changes they have experienced could affect them differently depending on their gender or on the gendered discourses on education and leadership. This lack of gender awareness, in relation to change, resembles that which the literature on leadership still reflects (see chapter 2). Acknowledging the gendered implications of change, however, is important in light of the considerable scope of recent re-structuring of education in Iceland.

In the interviews, the head teachers offered various examples and discussed dilemmas they have been faced with in relation to those changes. The changes have caused head teachers to reflect on the role of schools in relation to the new services and different practices. They have moreover contemplated their own role and how the changes have impacted on it. They have worried that the time spent on the provision of new services could impose upon those already provided. When required to adopt new work procedures they have tried to assess if they are better than those already in place. In all those instances, head teachers are looking inwards, and are consciously or unconsciously relying on their values to guide them and their own judgements in making decisions. Those values have gendered implications.

9.2.1 Gendered Experiences

Icelandic male and female heads bring different experiences into headship. Different careers and the experiences that have shaped them have had an impact on the way head teachers see schools and schooling. Siggi, for instance, argues that the women heads are more pedagogical while “I believe they [the male head teachers] were more interested in the financial aspect of the job”. He correctly points out how different and gendered the career paths of the female and male head teachers are. Much of this difference is caused by different cultural messages and the social construction of gender from birth, through the onset of headship and until the present time (Court 1994; Hall, 1996; Wood, 2005).

Those different experiences will have influenced head teachers’ choices, their professional careers, their aspirations and their actions, once they assumed their posts. Because of those different experiences the head teachers are also likely to have adopted different values, which they bring to their practice (see chapter 3, section 3.4). This research did not explore the origin of head teachers’ adoption of values, but there is research to support this claim (Anggård, 2005; Branson, 2005; Magnúsdóttir, 2003, 2005; Rodriguez et al. 2006).

Until recently most of the Icelandic male head teachers were either middle managers, deputies or teachers at the lower secondary level, whereas the women were elementary school teachers. Moreover, many of the men became head teachers after only a few years of teaching, or even upon graduation from teachers college. For women heads, this is an unlikely scenario. Most of them have had approximately 20 successful years of teaching experience before becoming head teachers. In those instances where they have been in management positions they have been subject coordinators. In this study, Krista, for instance, got her teachers' certificate late in life, or in her mid thirties. She became a head teacher in order to make an impact. Her greatest asset as a new head teacher lay in her pedagogical expertise and her experience as a teacher. This was also what she set out with and made the focus of her attention from the beginning. Runa explained how her entire career rested within the school that she is presently heading, where she was first a successful teacher, then a deputy, and "... if I may say so, I think my reputation was good". Similarly, Siggi comments that his two biggest assets are those of being good at human relations and being a seasoned change agent. His main interests are the same as Krista's, Runa's and indeed most of the other head teachers', those of teaching and learning. He, however, came to his present headship with almost 20 years of administrative experience. Whatever experience, competencies and values head teachers brought into headship, those provided the foundation on which they built their strengths. When the demand for new services or new skills was made, some of those qualities and experiences helped them to successfully cope with them while others did not.

9.2.2 Gendered Identities

From the perspective of critical leadership theory, feminist praxis challenges the assumptions of a market-led education system and the patriarchal 'masculine' attitudes to power that underpin it

(Hall, 1996, p. 192).

As suggested above (see chapters 2 and 4), head teachers have received various cultural messages relating to gender from early on. They have influenced their formation of both their gender and leadership identities and their adoption of personal values. Some of those values, many of which guide them in headship, will have become further manifested, while others were rejected later in life, even after those individuals became head teachers. Whatever those values are, they are an important part of head teachers' identities as leaders.

The importance of values is now recognized by a growing number of contemporary writers on leadership (see chapters 2 and 3). They have emphasized how essential it is for leaders to understand their values and their impact on their attitudes and actions (Begley, 2004, 2005; Branson, 2005, 2006; Rebore, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2001; Willower, 1999). The present research endorses this belief. Even if the head teachers rarely explicitly express their values, they become highlighted once they start discussing examples or dilemmas they have dealt with in headship. The above writers, however, do not specifically address gender in relation to leadership and values, a dimension which has been subject to examination in this study and in the research of a few other contemporary writers. Valerie Hall (1996), was a pioneer in making connections between leadership, values and gender. She proposed that because men and women constructed their gender identities from different cultural messages, it could be assumed that they would similarly construct their leadership identities and their headship in a different manner, depending on their gender (p. 201).

From the above discussion on gendered leadership identities it might be assumed that the hegemonic, managerial leadership discourse discussed earlier (see chapters 1-3) would appeal to the male more than the female head teachers. This discourse is seen by many to reflect a stereotypical masculine emphasis on rational technology (Blackmore, 1999), corporate management (Grace, 1997, p. 6), accountability, rules and regulations (Coleman with Lumby, 2007, p. 50), performativity and effectiveness (Guðbjörnsdóttir, 2001; Thrupp and Wilmott, 2003, p. 13). Collectively, these characteristics, which are often called 'new managerialism' (Gewirtz, 2002, p. 29), are seen to emphasize speed of decisions, coordination, target setting and monitoring, financial controls and cost improvements, information, responsiveness and consumer loyalty (p. 29). The findings of this study, however, do not endorse the view that the ideology of the market appeals to men more than women.

Head teachers' examples and dilemmas show that often their values have seriously conflicted with stakeholders in their environments who had embraced the values mirrored in the market ideology. They also indicate that there were times when they experienced inner conflicts over complicated issues that they needed to resolve. In those instances they either tried to align the circumstances to better fit their values and those of their personnel, and when they did not succeed looked for acceptable ways to adapt their practice to the environment. Their story is therefore far from being as ideal as that which the model head teachers described, for instance in the research by Gold et al

(2003), who all managed to uphold their values and those of their schools amid the forces of educational re-structuring.

This study, therefore, suggests that neither the male nor the female head teachers embrace the ideology of the market and the values that underpin it. Rather, they situate themselves outside this discourse of competition, performativity and technical rationality (Blackmore, 1999; Guðbjörnsdóttir, 2001; Thrupp and Wilmott, 2003). These head teachers, women and men, see themselves as primarily pedagogical leaders, rather than business executives. In their practice they emphasize the humanistic values of equality, care and compassion. Their focus is on the children and how they can best provide them with a pedagogically and instructionally safe yet challenging environment for learning and developing their potential to the fullest.

This indicates that in spite of the different and gendered experiences that the male and female head teachers may have had throughout their lives, they have shaped their leadership identities to fit the career of their choice that of serving the interest of school children. As their dilemmas show, this does not mean that they have always been able to act in accordance with this identity and the values that underpin it. They have, nonetheless, kept this vision alive and have strived to let human concerns, rather than mechanical or technical, guide them in their everyday practice. Both the male and the female head teachers in this research will have received messages about the kind of leadership behaviour which is seen to befit a contemporary leader. The men could more readily have adopted this leadership style than the women because, as discussed above, it is seen to reflect a predominantly masculine emphasis. Yet the men, just like the women, chose not to. Moreover, male head teachers like Addi and Siggi discussed how they had been encouraged to strive for administrative positions both as students and as teachers. They attributed this primarily to their gender. The findings suggest that those men found a way to enact their own interpretation of management and leadership because of, or in spite of, the social construction of their gender and leadership identities. The masculinity they express and enact in headship, a masculinity which can be called their own, is therefore not in line with the hegemonic masculinity which dominates the current discourse of education in Iceland and beyond.

However, those men, as well as the women heads, did try hard to fulfil their roles and meet the expectations of efficiency, technical rationality and performativity, while never losing sight of their primary duty to serve the best interest of the children. Because the

women were, and still are, unequally positioned to their male counterparts, in this new environment their situation is more exposed to opposition and controversy. Dilemmas described by Runa and Stina bear testimony to this fragile position of the women.

When the perspectives of the various writers and head teachers referred to above are taken together, they endorse Hall's contention (1996) about the impact of gendered messages on head teachers' gender and leadership identities. They also suggest that those different experiences (Anggård, 2005; Magnúsdóttir, 2003, 2005; Rodriguez et al. 2006) may impact on the adoption of head teachers' values and consequently their leadership behaviours. They do, however, also indicate that those values and identities are not fixed, but are rather fluid and subject to change throughout people's lives (Connell, 1995, 2000, pp.10-12; 2006, Mac an Ghaill, 1994, pp. 8-12).

9.3 Same Role – Similar Values

In light of the above, it does not come as a surprise that in spite of the diversity of head teachers' examples and dilemmas, the values they reflect are similar. Values are, after all, a part of people's psyche and:

The overwhelming conclusion from a hundred years of 'sex difference' research is that men and women are not very different at all, ...that women and men are psychologically very similar, as groups

(Connell, 2006, p. 42).

Among the most commonly identified values expressed or detected in head teachers' accounts are *integrity, care, equality, cooperation, loyalty, respect, fairness, honesty, responsibility, democracy* and *justice*. All the head teachers declared that their main responsibility was towards the children. The centrality of the children was apparent in expressions like "meeting the individual needs of every child" and "securing a safe and child-friendly working environment". When those value constructs and the value-related expressions are compiled they can be seen to reflect the humanistic values of care, respect and integrity. Those are the values that head teachers most often use to express their main concerns in relation to their students and staff.

Motivations for head teachers' decisions reveal an emphasis on cooperation and democratic procedures. In solving dilemmas the head teachers were primarily concerned with a consensus among stakeholders and the possible consequences their decisions might have for them. The findings include one example of a decision that appears to be

based on ethics or principles (Krista), and one where the decision seems to be based on a complicated weave of consequence-based values, values based on self-interest and on consensus (Runa). Similarly most of the decisions fall into Gewirt's cluster of 'welfarism' (2002) with one exception where concern for efficiency and cost effectiveness temporarily overruled the pedagogical concern (Stina).

Those values are similar to those found in the research of Dorn, O'Rourke and Papalewis (2001), Coleman (1996, 2000) and Strachan (1999), which were discussed in chapter 3. What the women in their research valued most were *caring, nurturing, inclusiveness, openness, intuition, collaboration* and *power sharing*. In their study of teams, Wallace and Hall (2003, p. 94) came to a similar conclusion. They found that men and women shared professional values about "*collaboration, equity and collective responsibility*".

In this research, head teachers often reverse the meaning of values by adding a negative prefix to them. Such examples include *unfairness, unjust, uncaring, disrespect, undeserving* and lack of *integrity*. Examples of this kind, which can be found in accounts by all the head teachers, primarily occurred in dilemmas involving conflicts they had with stakeholders outside the school premises, in the arena of *community-culture*. Taken together, the above are the values that the head teachers in this study emphasize, men and women alike, but to a different degree. Whatever their values are, they have influenced head teachers' everyday practice as well as their decisions in value-related dilemmas. All the female head teachers, Krista, Stina, Gunna, Gulla and Runa, seemed convinced that providing high quality teaching in a safe and friendly environment was their main duty. The way Addi, Siggi and Haddi, and to a somewhat lesser degree Asi and Halli, expressed themselves in relation to their role was no different – their main concern was to provide high quality education to every child.

9.4 The Unequal Position of Women and Men Heads

The low status of teaching is inextricably related to society's traditional perception of work involving children as being the role of women, and the work of women being historically undervalued and underpaid

(Cushman, 2005, p. 14 quoted in Coleman with Lumby, p. 44).

As already established, this research suggests that Icelandic head teachers, both women and men, apply similar values in their practice as head teachers. Their accounts moreover reflect head teachers' emphasis on treating people, young and old,

respectfully, a sincere wish to meet the educational needs of every child, and to provide a safe yet challenging environment for their students and staff. Addi talks about making sure that every flower has the potential to blossom. He does this with a smile as he explains that in essence this phrase, as good as it is, was borrowed from a very controversial Chinese authority figure. Siggi is preoccupied with teaching and learning and keeps educating himself in this area now, 20 years into headship. Head teachers bring those beliefs and the values underpinning them into headship and they have the potential to become a cornerstone in their construction of leadership identity. Such a view holds regardless of gender.

Those findings endorse those of Coleman (2002), who examined secondary head teachers, men and women, in England and Wales (see chapter 3) and found that both men and women favoured a style that valued people and collaborative approaches (p.161). In more recent research Coleman (2005), found that among the adjectives chosen by both men and women head teachers to express their management style were *open*, *consultative*, *democratic* and *collaborative*. This is also consistent with the findings in an Icelandic survey (Edwardsdóttir, 2004) where all the men and women head teachers were found to emphasize *care*, *cooperation* and *informal relationships* with staff and students. Finally, recent research among Swedish male and female heads (Franzén, 2006) suggests that the “scientific discourse which emphasizes the importance of close and good relations between the leader and the staff might have contributed to establishing a female norm as normal”.

However, this does not mean that female and male head teachers are equally positioned. On the contrary, as mentioned above the men are more likely to have been encouraged to apply for leadership positions and to be supported once they assumed their post. Addi had been encouraged to lead since he was in teachers’ college and Siggi had been encouraged to take on administrative positions merely, as he perceived it, because he was male, while experiencing hostility towards aspiring female leaders. Their stories show that there is “tendency is for men to rise to the top even when they are in areas of female dominated work (Coleman with Lumby, 2007, p. 45). The administrative experience of most of the men has been invaluable for the practice of their work, especially in relation to financing and various technical aspects of their current role. Women’s primary strength lies in their well-thought-out pedagogical ideas and experience as successful teachers. Even if those qualities are appreciated, they do not suffice to be perceived as a good contemporary leader unless they are coupled with

proficiency in technical and financial matters. The women and men thus received different messages about what kind of behaviour was appropriate for their gender and were encouraged to follow gendered careers. The current policy context with an emphasis on stereotypical masculine traits (see chapters 1, 2 and 3) is also likely to disadvantage more women than men. Coleman with Lumby (2007, p. 159) observe that “the increased accountability of leaders in education may be particularly hard on women, who are more likely to be noticed and held up to public scrutiny as a result of their outsider status as leaders”.

The main strength of the women head teachers lies in their pedagogical knowledge and teaching competence. This exchange of what they see as custodian services for pedagogical may not be welcomed. Even if most of the men in this research present themselves as strong pedagogical leaders, this asset is additional to other proficiencies and experiences they have, such as administrative. Because of this experience the men may perceive themselves as being more authoritative than the women do.

Educational discourses are, however, not always easily detected. Siggi mentioned especially that his female colleagues had asked for centralized decisions to coordinate the actions of schools in relation to the first and last day of teaching, winter holidays and other practical issues of schooling. The quotation below suggests that Siggi suspected that the men and women heads might have held similar views on the matter.

But the female head teachers also more readily called for authority from above. I am not saying that they [the male heads] wouldn't have done this also, but they just kept quiet about it. It caught my attention that in smaller group discussions they were just as eager to accept that the decisions were made centrally.

The possibility exists that the men would welcome such directions yet choose not to voice their interest, while the women head teachers talk more openly about such issues. If that is the case, one explanation of women's wishes may be that their decisions are more readily questioned than the men's. The women might therefore want to safeguard themselves by referring to centralized decisions.

A comment by Binna, one of the deputies, supports this. It suggests that she feels empowered by such official messages. In her opinion, it is precisely because it is the municipality that advocates the policy on differentiated learning and sends out the message to schools that this is what they are expected to do, that people are more likely to comply. “Now, we can say that this is the policy of the superintendency, and I think

this carries weight, not only within the school but also among parents. In my opinion this has given us authority ... I don't think it limits our possibilities”.

The women moreover reported various gendered discriminatory behaviour from both parents and city employees, while the men offered no such incidents. This further increased their disadvantaged position, compared to the male heads. The women head teachers have therefore needed to apply unorthodox methods in their practice, like taking men with them to meetings. Some of them have found it hard to establish themselves as authority figures in their own right because they have not fit the stereotypical image of a leader. Because of this, their authority has been questioned. The position of women heads has been further weakened by the increased involvement of parents and the pressure brought on by their tight monitoring.

In the past 10-15 years, the emphasis on technology, mechanical and technical solutions has increased steadily. The target setting and tight monitoring are parts of this educational system where conformity of practice within a competitive environment is encouraged. The newly presented regulations on disciplinary actions in schools in the city of Reykjavík are but one example of a procedure which is intended to ensure conformity of actions.

There are, however, some occupations to which it is difficult to apply managerial reforms of any type. For instance, occupations that require a high degree of discretion and judgement in day-to-day work are difficult to manage in a mechanical way (Gewirtz 2000 p. 42). The majority of problems and situations that contemporary head teachers face are characterized by ambiguity and confusion. These problems are moreover located in turbulent environments where practice is largely indeterminate (Sergiovanni, 2006, p. 72).

The different experiences (see chapters 3 and 4) of men and women head teachers are likely to have disadvantaged more women than men. In this thesis, several writers have been quoted to shed light on the different behaviour young children are exposed to. People, relatives and friends, for instance, often assume that boys and girls have different interests and consequently give them different types of presents. This is one reason children may take up behaviours irrespective of parental values. The following quotation from Francis (2005), about the gendered social construction of her two young sons in relation to technology, further highlights this point.

... people tend to assume boys are, or will be, interested in particular things has meant that my sons are given particular toys, books and resources as presents. As a result vehicles and technical resources are disproportionately represented among their toys and books. Many of these encourage further engagement and perpetuate learning in that area (for example, many of my sons' books on diggers and trains are incredibly technical and informative

(p. 80).

As a result, Francis claims to have learned more about such vehicles and their mechanisms in the space of three years than she had previously picked up in a lifetime (2005, p. 80). Many women are likely to identify with Francis's experience, both as children and as mothers. The consequences of such experiences are highlighted in Icelandic research where head teachers' authority was most often questioned in relation to the technical aspects of their role (Guðbjörnsdóttir, 1997, p. 185).

Another dimension of technical advancements is the role played by information technology in both school curriculum and in the daily professional life of schools. This has been quite a challenge for those who don't see themselves as technologically oriented. Modern schools and their leaders are expected to have harnessed information technology and integrated it into their everyday practices, and most of them have. The municipality of Reykjavik expects head teachers to be knowledgeable and proficient in IT. Most of the head teachers in this study belong to a generation where eight out of ten head teachers did not learn to operate computers until late in life. However, the male participants are far ahead of the women. This situation does not seem to be changing because Icelandic boys have been found to have considerable IT headway over girls in compulsory schools (Jakobsdóttir, 1999a, 1999b).

Technology, therefore, seems to be predominately masculine, having been developed, sustained and promoted by men. It is therefore not surprising that men are most proficient in this area and the main users within the field. They dominate the masculine discourse which often marginalizes women because of their perceived, and often real, incompetence in the area. Computer literacy is an advantage for various reasons. First, it allows one to access a great deal of information almost instantly. This applies both to information outside the school and to inside information such as attendance and behavioural problems. This saves time that can then be spent on other important issues, something Asi, Haddi and Halli were appreciative of. Second, IT skills carry a certain prestige, being seen as an advantage and an asset. Overall, therefore, it impacts not only

on head teachers' everyday practice but also on the way they perceive themselves as head teachers and thus how they construct their leadership identity in their posts.

The findings of this research suggest that even if all the head teachers need to face up to various new requirements, women heads may be subjected to more pressure from stakeholders than men. The dilemmas of Stina, Runa and Krista, and the examples offered by some of the women deputies, offered insights into this dimension of their professional lives. The number and kinds of issues women head teachers are expected to deal with may also be different from those brought to the attention of male heads. In research among Icelandic educational leaders (Guðbjörnsdóttir, 2001, p. 21), some of the female heads mentioned that the number and types of problems people expected them to deal with were probably different from those of male heads. Among them were various personal issues and "small issues" such as children losing their towels (p. 21). Moreover, as leaders, the women heads seem reluctant to take followership for granted while "the men who are given formal positions of power may make the culturally justified assumption that others will follow." (Hall, 1996, p. 137). Hall points out that the inability to take followership for granted because of gender might constitute another dimension of women leaders that distinguishes them from men.

As mentioned above, this research offers various examples and accounts of discriminatory, gendered behaviour of parents, teachers, civil servants and colleagues both prior to and upon taking on headship. Such examples were related by Siggi and Addi, who mostly benefited from them, and from Runa and Stina, who were burdened by them. It was therefore the women head teachers, rather than the men, whose authority was questioned. This tight system of monitoring and surveillance on behalf of stakeholders outside the school suggests that women, more than the male heads, are under pressure to conform.

These findings, therefore, are in keeping with those of Coleman (2002) who pointed out that society assigns different status to men and women head teachers and therefore being a female head teacher is a very different experience from being a male head teacher. The power of expectations is further highlighted by Wallace and Hall (2003, p. 89), who point out that individuals occupy a social position and their actions are, to a great extent, determined by what others expect of anyone in that position in terms of their responsibilities and individual idiosyncratic preferences. Status, as well as other expectations of leader behaviour, are reflected in the gendered educational discourses

that affect the way people construct school leadership. For instance, Franzén (2006) found in her research that Swedish teachers expect their female leaders to emphasize the supportive aspect of their role, but the male leaders to emphasize the managerial aspect.

Apparently the position of women leaders is still fragile. In a survey of head teachers, Coleman (2004) found that over 70% of female secondary heads felt that they had to prove their worth as female leaders. Unfortunately the number had risen considerably as it was 10% higher than in the 1990s. Even if the proportion of men who endorsed this view had also increased, it did so to a lesser degree (Coleman, 2005).

9.5 The Renouncement of Gender

We would be naive to accept the almost total denial by most respondents (women and men) of the influence of gender on team behaviour as evidence that gender differentiation does not exist

(Wallace and Hall, 2003, p. 94).

The head teachers who participated in this study did not share any accounts of what they perceived as gender-related difficulties. However, when asked directly if gender might have mattered, all of them said that it did.

Head teachers' denial of gender related dilemmas in spite of the diverse gender related incidents they encountered is interesting for various reasons. First, most of them have gender awareness and the examples in this chapter show this awareness clearly. Second, most of them have needed to respond to what they perceived as gendered situations in their lives prior to their headship. Yet on the cognitive level, they do not acknowledge gender as having had an impact on them or their role, at least not to the extent of perceiving it as a problem.

This can be interpreted in many ways. It is significant that even when the female head teachers are discussing patronizing behaviour of parents (fathers) and male public servants, they don't address it as a problem even if they found it necessary to take special measures to meet the particular circumstances. In the interviews this behaviour and events are presented as if they are a 'reality' that can't be escaped and needs to be either kept under control or accepted. One reason may be that it is not until they are asked to reflect on the possible implications of gender that they realize the impact of gender on headship. A second reason may be that they don't like the idea that gender shapes their role or their actions and therefore reject any such notions to the extent that

they become gender blind. Gulla, for instance, maintains that she never thinks about gender or the age of people, she simply works with people. A third reason is that rarely does gender stick out as the most influential factor; rather there are other, more obvious, elements at work. Whatever the reason, head teachers' reactions to issues of gender underscore how important it is for researchers to apply the lens of gender to narratives and practice because otherwise gender remains subliminal in the examination of leadership and values. Last, but not least, it is conceivable that the head teachers don't mention gender because their vision of their professional life in general is limited or fragmented, making it difficult to make connections between one area and another. Being offered an opportunity to reflect on their situations and their beliefs may, however, make them aware of the various interconnected areas of their professional lives.

9.6 Summary

In this chapter the findings of the present study were highlighted and discussed. The first half of the chapter focused on the findings with respect to new services such as day care and catering services and how they had changed head teachers' role. In the latter half of the chapter the gendered dimension of this change was discussed and the implications it may have had on head teachers.

The research indicates that those changes impacted in various ways on the head teachers. Even if the head teachers are appreciative of the increased autonomy of schools in recent years, they question the real impact of it because of the detailed target setting and tight monitoring. They have, moreover, not adopted the current educational managerial discourse and seem to position themselves outside of it. This position holds regardless of gender. Those head teachers see themselves as primarily pedagogical leaders who emphasize values of equality, compassion and care. Those values, and other similar values about people, guided them in their decisions. There were times when the head teachers succeeded in finding solutions that were in harmony with their preferred personal values. There were, however, also incidents when they had to make compromises between their values and those of other stakeholders. Even if the women and men share similar values the women are still unequally positioned to men in various ways. Women have faced gendered discriminatory behaviour by school stakeholders, they have less administrative experience, they are entering headship at a time when stereotypical masculine values permeate educational policy and they are less likely than

the men to have been encouraged to lead. This may have affected the manner in which they constructed their leadership identity and how they acted it out once in their posts.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

10.0 Introduction

The emphasis on performativity and efficiency endangers to de-emphasize values of equality, care and multiculturalism

(Guðbjörnsdóttir, 2001, p. 43).

I set out to examine the values of ten Icelandic headteachers, five women and five men, as they are reflected in narratives of their thoughts and actions. I particularly focused on the impact of values on decisions in value conflict situations, or dilemmas, in the current era of educational change. Some major sources of the conflicts, causing the dilemmas, as well as the motivational bases for solving them, were explored. I attempted to bring together the three concepts; *leadership, values, and gender* within the micro- and macro environment of schools. The impact of the dominant educational discourse and its implications for the role of headteachers was explored. The main findings were reported and discussed in chapters 5-8. In Chapter 9 the findings were highlighted and further discussed. In this final chapter, I attempt to summarize the findings with a short concluding discussion about change, and the three interrelated constructs of leadership, values and gender. I will also discuss some of the main limitations and contributions of this research and suggests areas for further research.

At the outset, I proposed that the recent re-structuring of education in Iceland was having an impact on headteachers role because their values and those of stakeholders in the environment might not be easily compatible. The aim was to examine values, in an attempt to explain their influence on the actions of women and men headteachers. A second aim was to explore the various ways in which gendered discourses, and their underlying values, might impact on headteachers actions, as they interacted with school stakeholders. To that end, the following research questions were formulated:

How are the values of women and men head teachers reflected in their narratives?

How do values influence their actions?

How do women and men head teachers react when they perceive their own values to be in conflict with those of other school stakeholders, public policy or market forces?

How do gender and gendered discourses impact on the values and actions of women and men head teachers?

The intention was to seek answers by examining value related decisions of headteachers. A further intention was to examine values, their origin and their social construction and gendered nature, as well as the manifestations of dominant values by individuals and society. This required an examination of the interplay, and possible conflicts, between headteachers values and those of their working environment. This involved the values informing formal school policy, those of scholarly work on educational leadership as well as the values of school stakeholders, such as parents and teachers. Thus, headteachers perceptions of, and responses to the dilemmas they encountered, in the professional context of their role, was examined.

My choice of subject, as well as the focus of the study, reflects the recognition that it is essential for leaders to understand how values reflect underlying human motivations and how they can shape subsequent attitudes, speech and actions (Begley, 2005; Branson, 2006; Hodgkinson, 1991; Sergiovanni, 2001; Willower, 1991). I assumed that it was important for educational leaders to reflect on, and know, their own values as well as being sensitive to those of others. I was further encouraged to choose this topic, by the growing literature in support of the importance of values for educational leadership (Begley, 1999, 2003; Branson, 2005; Gold, 1996, 1997; Hall, 1996; Hodgkinson, 1991; Sergiovanni, 2000, 2001; Willower 1999). I also believed that gender was an important, yet missing link, in the literature on values and leadership, and wanted to shed some light on the interplay of these three constructs, *leadership, values and gender*. I pointed out that until recently, Icelanders had needed to rely on research from abroad, mainly the United States, England and Australia and argued that it was important to gain knowledge and new insights which were based on Icelandic research. I therefore proposed that this study should add new insights as well as contribute to the development of research on leadership in Iceland as well as more widely.

10.1 Leading in an Era of Change

This study has highlighted that the Icelandic headteachers work in a changing and unstable environment where values of policy makers and citizens, individuals and groups alike, often compete for recognition. Operating successfully in such an environment requires multiple skills, experience and knowledge but also insights, reflection and understanding of one's own values and the values and ethical stance of

others (Begley, 1999, 2003, 2004; Branson, 2005, 2006; Gold, 1996; Hall, 1996; Hodgkinson, 1991). Participants in this study discussed their role in the light of these changes. They also described incidents which they had perceived as involving value related dilemmas and discussed how they dealt with them and resolved them. All the headteachers contributed generously with examples and vignettes. Collectively, the ten headteachers in this study volunteered a number of critical incidents or dilemmas. Many of these dilemmas were presented and discussed earlier in the thesis. The chapters also relate numerous examples of headteachers' views and ways of approaching people and tasks as well as direct quotations taken from their narratives. The vignettes and examples have highlighted the changing scope and nature of their work, the multiplicity of conflicting demands and, last but not least, the difficult issues they have needed to address and resolve and how they arrived at their resolutions. The findings have moreover shed light on the gendered implications of change and their impact on headteachers.

10.1.1 A New Moral Environment

Findings of this study indicate that even if the headteachers are openly critical about many of the latest developments, such as the detailed target setting and monitoring, many of them make comments about the apparent ambitions reflected in current educational policies and practices of the local education authorities in the municipality of Reykjavík. They also welcome the increased autonomy of schools while questioning its impact because of the heavy monitoring which accompanies it.

Some of the most difficult decisions headteachers now face, were not theirs to take only a few years back. In principle, professional autonomy appeals to all the headteachers. In practice, this has proved easier said than done. They are being told that everything is up to them and, at first glance, this is how it appears to be. But in their environment there are many powerful agents and stakeholders and every step of the way they have needed to negotiate solutions and decisions. The freedom, or “the blessed autonomy”, as Krista, one of the head teachers, expressed it, is restricted and strained by monitoring, limited funds and competing interests of stakeholders.

Most of the Icelandic headteachers talk about ‘the way things were’ and refer to recent changes in the macro environment of schools as ‘the new reality’. It is this ‘reality’ they have tried to come to terms with and are still adjusting to. This raises the question how certain values come to dominate policy making and discourse about education and how

this may affect educational leaders differently depending on their gender. Iceland, like most other western European countries, is caught up in a continuous flow of market driven agendas. This is reflected in the media, in dominant discourse about quality of life and in the concepts used by politicians and money makers alike. Last but not least, this is obvious in the narratives of participants of this study, the headteachers who are learning how to survive and prosper in an environment described by Gewirtz (2002) as “a transformational process that brings into play a new set of values and a new moral environment” (p. 47).

10.2 The Value Dimension

Headteachers have responded in various ways to the recent changes and some of them have come at quite a cost. Whatever approach was chosen in the end, whether they resisted, complied or adapted, all of this has at times, been trying both professionally and personally. In order to solve the dilemmas caused by opposing and competing views, headteachers have not only needed to consider the views and values of others but also their own which, in the end, have provided the basis for their value judgements. Their narratives have drawn attention to the fact that there are times when neither knowledge nor experience are adequate, situations which have called for reflection, a search for a barometer or a criteria for something which they would usually call ‘a good’ solution. This has highlighted the place of values in headteachers’ decision making because it is here that the headteachers’ personal and professional values and valuation processes have come into play. It is also here that the headteachers probably recognized the particular problems as dilemmas (Langlois, 2004, p. 84) which could only be solved by making judgements. Headteachers’ narratives indicate that values have played an important role in their professional lives, both as a foundation on which they base their every day practice and as a guiding light in difficult situations. A few of them refer to these values by names in their narratives. Asi talks about “equality” being his ‘guiding light’ but mostly their values are reflected in the way they explain, clarify or rationalize their words and actions.

All of the headteachers reported complicated and at times difficult situations because actors, to whom it is now popularly referred as ‘the market’, make demands which they have seen as being beyond their, or their school’s, capacity or beyond the pedagogical role they assign to the school. These conflicts and disputes have been of various nature involving structures and procedures as well as policies and ideologies. Krista’s dispute

with parents and education authorities over catering services is one and Runa's, and Stina's over class size another. Deputy heads like Kata and Anna refer to examples where parents act as consumers of the free market as they demand services for their children far beyond anything which a public school can provide.

10.3 The Gender Dimension

Findings of this study draw attention to the position of women headteachers who have become headteachers in a political era which is dominated by values many see as predominantly task oriented and product related rather than people and process oriented. The restructuring of schools, involving greater financial responsibility, new services, target setting and monitoring, has affected women and men differently. Unlike men, most of the women have entered headship after a long teaching career but with little or no administrative experience. School administration in Iceland was, until recently, a predominantly male profession and the few men who became school teachers soon entered headship, often after a few years as deputy heads. Teaching, on the other hand, is still a predominantly female profession, a job known for its flexible working hours, a situation seen as ideal for women with families and children. Now as women are increasingly entering headship the focus has been moving away from primarily pedagogical concerns towards that of administration and bureaucracy. Some of the research which is referred to in this study (see Chapter 2) has shown that there are gender related differences in the way women and men educational leaders express themselves about their role as well as how they behave, once in post.

With one exception, the women participants belong to the growing number of Icelandic women who have assumed positions in the past 10-15 years. In most instances, they are successors of men in older schools rather than newly appointed headteachers in new schools. In 3 of the 5 schools led by women, the women replaced elderly men who were retiring after 30-40 years of service. The changes in these older, traditional, male led, city schools may not have been in harmony with changes in society. This again may have led to frustrations among stakeholders, such as parents, who had become impatient to see societal changes being reflected in the way schools operate. The accumulated weight of these requirements may have had an impact on the position of the growing number of women entering headship during this time. Even if newly appointed male headteachers have in some instances replaced men, different expectations have sheltered them from actions like those Runa described.

Findings of this study are a reminder of the different realities women and men often have met upon entering headship in the past decade (Coleman, 2005). Stereotypes about men's and women's spheres still expect women to become teachers of young children but men to become school managers. Similarly role expectations about headteachers are likely to be based on stereotypes about male behaviour rather than female. Different expectations of men and women throughout their lives, within their families and in schools have influenced their leadership identity, the way they see themselves and their role in society. All of this is likely to impact differently upon men and women and make a difference as to whether they are able to shape their role or have a voice and be heard in the discourse about educational leadership and policy making.

10.4 Some Contributions and Limitations of this Study

The literature on leadership and values as well as on leadership and gender has grown considerably in the past 10-20 years. This research, however, has failed to examine the depths of educational leadership simultaneously from a value perspective, and through the lens of gender. In the present study, however, I attempted to explore these three concepts, their relationship and their possible impact on headteachers actions. Below I highlight the main limitations of the study. I also discuss the main contribution of the study for educational research as well as for myself as a researcher.

10.4.1 Contribution to Existing Research on Leadership, Values and Gender

To date, much of the literature on leadership and values has focused on value descriptions and lists of value priorities. Even if this is important, more depth is necessary. Therefore, Begley has (2003) encouraged an examination of the deeper levels of the human psyche, such as the motives behind the adoption of particular values and their consequences for behaviour, especially when faced with value related conflicts.

A first important contribution of my research, therefore, lies in the decision to take this challenge and approach values differently. Rather than asking headteachers directly about their values, I asked them to tell me about value related dilemmas and attempted to unravel the values through their narratives. As mentioned above, this strategy turned out to be appropriate and helpful for examining headteachers values as well as how they resolved value related dilemmas. In order to examine the motives behind headteachers'

adoption of values in resolving value related dilemmas, I applied a different model, that of Hodgkinsons' typology of values (1991, p. 98; Begley, 2003, pp.7-8). Together these two frameworks helped me to explore headteachers' values as well as the motivations they reflected.

A second contribution of my research is that of adding the dimension of gender, to the examination of leadership and values, in an attempt to explore the interplay between these three concepts. Even if others have addressed leadership, values and gender they have done so incidentally and literature on this relationship hardly exists (Coleman, 2005; Edvardsdóttir, 2000; Guðbjörnsdóttir, 2001; Hall, 1996). Therefore, by focusing directly on this relationship I believe that I am breaking fresh grounds.

Therefore, the third main contribution of this research is that of developing a framework for this examination. This proved to be necessary because an existing framework for exploring this interplay was not to be found. I therefore developed an analytical tool based on a model from Begley (2004) as well as concepts from postmodern literature, mainly *discourse* which became an additional, yet integrated, lens for this examination. I see this model as an important contribution to the continuing search for a deeper understanding of how these concepts are related and how their interplay may impact on the role and position of leaders. By developing an already existing model, that of Begley's administrative arenas, should make the adapted framework accessible to those who are already familiar with the values and leadership literature.

Finally, for Icelandic research in the public sector, this study has highlighted, and attempted to analyse, the impact of recent changes of the environment on Icelandic schools and the role of headteachers. To this end I applied a framework from Gewirtz (2002) which furthers an understanding of to what extent the headteachers were in agreement with the current re-structuring of education.

These changes have had an impact on the role of headteachers and changed both its scope and nature. Because the changes are gendered, it was necessary to use a framework which captured the gendered nature of these changes and their impact on the headteachers. The impact of these changes may be stronger and more extensive in Iceland than in the neighbouring countries because they were implemented late, yet fast. This study therefore, makes an important contribution to the understanding of these changes and their impact on Icelandic schools.

To summarize, I believe this study is an important contribution to Icelandic research in the public sector. It is moreover a contribution to the existing research on education in general and on leadership and values specifically. Last, but not least, the development of framework for analysing the interplay of leadership and gender opens up the possibility of bridging the divide between these three important dimensions of school administration, leadership, values and gender. Such an understanding may support leaders in their continuing search for becoming authentic leaders (Begley, 2003, p.1; Hall, 1996, p. 98).

10.4.2 Contribution to me, Professionally and Personally

As a feminist researcher I find it important to highlight what this study has done for me professionally and personally. The doctoral studies have been a unique learning experience, an adventure even. Reflecting on these four years, it seems as if I have been developing, personally and professionally, from the first tentative initial steps along this path.

The studies offered a welcome, and necessary, opportunity to explore and seek answers to many of the questions, which through the years, had been challenging me in my professional work. Many of these questions were epistemological as I had come to realize that the literature on educational leadership had a strong masculine bias. I therefore knew from early on, that gender would need to be addressed.

About half way into my studies it had already become quite clear that this would not be an easy task. I was reminded of this at my upgrade when one of the upgraders complained that gender was not adequately addressed in my analysis. This led me along many avenues which all offered little but new dead ends. Finally I realized that I would have to attempt to develop my own framework for the integration of gender and consequently the interplay between the three key constructs in my research, leadership, values and gender. As already mentioned, this is what I set out to do.

I also gained considerable insights into, and knowledge about, leadership and values, feminist movements and feminist research, all of which was a prerequisite for doing my present research and will continue to guide my future work.

I did, however, not only acquire knowledge and skills, because I also acknowledged new and important 'truths' about myself. I realized, for instance, that I was a feminist and acknowledged that this position would be highlighted whenever appropriate in my

future work. As an adult learner and a full time teacher, I became more alert to my students overall well being. I consequently made a point of being more sensitive to their needs as whole persons rather than 'just' as my students. I am convinced that because of this I have become a better teacher as well as enjoying my teaching a great deal more. Now, as my present studies are being brought to a closure I am convinced that I have not only grown as an academic and a researcher but also as a person.

10.4.3 Some Limitations of this Study

As already pointed out, this study involves only ten out of 35 headteachers in the municipality of Reykjavík and nine deputies. The information and insights they provide can therefore not be seen as representative of the views of all the headteachers in the city. A second note of caution relates to the fact that, with two exceptions, these headteachers represent the same generation of 50-65 year old women and men. Younger headteachers, as well as headteachers with a shorter career in headship may express different views. Similarly, the seven school districts, out of the total of ten, are unequally represented since the majority of the schools, were established before the year 1995.

It is also important to note that the adapted model, Begley's administrative arenas, was developed for this particular study and it has therefore not been used before. It should therefore not be assumed that the model fully serves the purpose of detecting and analysing the gendered nature of leadership discourses or the interplay between leadership, values and gender.

10.5 Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Above, I have attempted to point out the main strengths and weaknesses of this research and later in the chapter I have also identified issues which might be of interest and importance for future research. While writing the thesis, it was not my intention to make recommendations. In the discussion of the thesis at the viva I was encouraged to add a further section analysing findings to indicate my major recommendations relating to policy and practice.

10.5.1 Changing of Programmes and Work Procedures

As already established, the environment of Icelandic schools, as well as elsewhere, has changed considerably in recent years. These changes have had a great impact on the

scope and nature of head teachers' role. The number of innovations and the speed at which many of them have been implemented has caused great turmoil in many of the schools. This research has indicated that this is particularly true in relation to hot meals. Apparently catering services were implemented with too great a force, putting enormous pressure on head teachers, both from parents and the superintendency. In some instances neither the necessary venue nor staff were available. Consequently many head teachers, and their deputy heads in particular, spent hours on a daily basis dealing with issues that would, under different circumstances, have been taken care of by other staff. Arguably this is poor use of their time. Even if head teachers agree that these services are necessary in contemporary schools, they object to the way they were introduced.

It is therefore recommended that educational authorities acknowledge the vast literature on change and school development which suggests that practitioners need to agree not only on the content of the changes themselves, but on the way changes are brought about. If this is not done, good ideas may be lost, resulting in anything from lack of commitment to open resistance, which can hinder or delay implementation of important services, new ideologies or practices.

10.5.2 Gendered Implications of Change

As already pointed out, most of the literature on management and leadership is gender-biased or gender-blind (see Chapter 2). This can have serious implications in practice because the research on which this literature is based often underpins policy making and decisions by legislators. Their ideas have thus not been analysed from a gender perspective. Such an omission by legislators at the state, and policy makers at the municipal levels, may strengthen stereotypical views on the status and role of men and women and decisions may not take equally into account the needs, possibilities or expectations of women and men.

It is therefore important to critically examine research in the light of possible gendered implications before public administrative decisions are made, whether in relation to legal texts such as the National Curriculum Guide (Guðný Guðbjörnsdóttir, 2003) or at the level of the municipalities.

The gendered nature of change has an even greater significance in light of the fact that the workforce that makes up head teachers has just recently changed from being predominantly male to having an equal proportion of women and men. The newly

recruited women heads have thus been taking on roles which have been shaped by men and are working in an environment which is seen to foster many stereotypically masculine characteristics.

The ten head teachers in this research all have a reputation for being successful, women as well as men. This and earlier research in Iceland and elsewhere suggests that the head teachers share similar values that are likely to shape their everyday practices (Anna Guðrún Edvardsdóttir, 2000; Coleman, 2000, 2005; Hall, 1996). However, this research as well as that of others indicates that their position is unequal in various ways (Blackmore, 1999; Coleman, 2002, 2005; Shakeshaft, 1999). One reason is that men and women head teachers meet gendered expectations. Sometimes these expectations require women heads to behave in accordance with stereotypes derived from an ideal type of male head teachers; at other times women heads are patronized because of what seems to be a general lack of respect for women because of their gender. Another reason is the different experiences of men and women heads prior to taking on headship, which means that they bring different skills and expertise to the role which are, in turn, valued differently. For instance, men's tendency to have acquired skills in IT, finance and management are more highly valued than expertise in teaching. These different perspectives on the importance of particular professional skills and qualities are, at least partly, caused by the market-driven, managerial environment which seems to prioritise economic over human values.

Regardless of gender, contemporary masculine values which have become hegemonic (Blackmore, 1999; Hargreaves, 1994, Whitehead, 1999) are not reflected in head teachers' narratives, whether men or women. Their primary concern is the children, their well-being and overall education (see sections 3.3 – 3.5 in Chapter 3 for further elaboration on masculinities and femininities).

In light of the above, head teachers might benefit greatly from participating in a dialogue about educational policy and the values underpinning it. As a group they could promote their vision for education and for Icelandic schools. They might even choose to step forward and take an active part in the debate about public education, voice their views on the impact of the market and identify with the kind of critical education management/leadership some of the contemporary theorist have been promoting (Grace, 1997; Gewirtz, 2002; Hatcher, 2004; Sinclair, 1999; Thrupp and Wilmott, 2003). This kind of debate focusing on the values underlying education might moreover facilitate

the reconstruction of leadership, referred to earlier in the thesis (see chapter 3) and thus benefit society at large.

This research suggests that gender would not be a barrier to an open discussion between the men and the women heads. The similarities of professional views and personal values, regardless of head teachers' gender, moreover suggest that effective educational leadership may be based on a vision and values which run counter to the hegemonic masculine mode of leading, referred to above. The narratives of the ten head teachers participating in this research fully support this statement.

The unequal position of men and women in terms of gender identities has various and serious implications. As the discussion above indicates, many theorists have claimed that the current leadership discourse is of a predominantly masculine nature. In terms of leadership, the values which underpin it and the gender of those who provide it, call for a continuous and critical exploration of the current leadership discourse. In order to do so they need to create their own space, their own forum.

10.5.3 Platform for Head Teachers

Head teachers have been chosen as leaders of education in the public schools. The turbulent environment with relentless changes and a lack of resources has increased the pressure on head teachers considerably. One way of gaining support and strength under such circumstances is to establish a platform where they can feel secure about sharing professional and personal experiences. Such a platform needs to be their own, without interference from education authorities. This research suggests that Icelandic head teachers need such a forum, away from the interference of other school stakeholders, a time and place where they can offer one another valuable support by meeting informally to discuss professional matters of the moment.

10.5.4 Communication

Head teachers' and deputies' narratives draw attention to adverse communication patterns that seem to have developed between the superintendency and the head teachers. Some of the head teachers complain about decisions being made in their name even if they had little to do with them. Others mention incidents where the structure and content of meetings with superiors was entirely different from what the head teachers had expected or asked for.

These and similar examples suggest that it would be beneficial to adopt or develop formal procedures which would serve as a blueprint for formal meetings. Head teachers would thus know beforehand which city officials to expect at meetings. They would also be informed about any changes in agenda for the meetings and, depending on the agenda, they could ask their co-workers to accompany them. Such an arrangement should ensure that head teachers are not put in disempowering situations, as well as make the meetings more effective.

10.5.5 Head Teachers and Autonomy

Head teachers in the city of Reykjavík are experienced and well educated. This research suggests that they are moreover enthusiastic about shouldering the responsibility of being educational leaders in their schools. This involves being given opportunities to initiate new programmes or work procedures which are tailored to the needs of their particular schools. Most of the head teachers talk with regret about the loss of professional autonomy caused by detailed target-setting and monitoring and an emphasis on conformity. Many of the head teachers have therefore asked themselves what, if anything, the often applauded autonomy amounts to.

Authorities would therefore do well to acknowledge that educated professionals may lose their motivating force to be educational entrepreneurs if everything is predetermined by detailed target setting and monitoring. Before uniformly requiring the adoption of ideas or practices, it might therefore be fruitful for authorities and head teachers to collectively examine future plans, from both a general perspective as they relate to all the schools, and from the specific, that of individual schools. If the changes are not bound by law, it seems preferable for each head teacher, with her/his staff and parent representatives, to have a say as to whether, or when, changes are implemented. This approach is likely to increase the commitment and loyalty of stakeholders.

10.6 Some Suggestions for Further Research

This research suggests that the values of women and men headteachers are similar and the same goes for their perceived leadership behaviour. The findings of the present study are endorsed by those of Hall (1996) and Coleman (2002, 2005) as well as the Icelandic study by Edvardsdóttir (2000). The implications of this development raise many questions which will need to be addressed in future research. Among these are the following:

- Is the impact of gender on the leadership behaviour of women and men disappearing? If so, why is that and what has caused this change?
- Does the social construction of gender and leadership within organizations cause male leaders to adopt the values of the predominantly female workforce or is it the other way around? Have women leaders adopted the values and simulated the behaviour of male leaders in society?
- Do the research designs, methodologies and methods of data collection, fail to capture the influence of gender on behaviour? If so, what would be the appropriate approach? Are further studies necessary before these results can be confirmed?
- What are the origin and circumstances of headteachers adoption of values and what are the gendered implications of their value 'choices' for aspiring and acting head teachers?

This research includes headteachers who have been through similar experiences in the changing context of headship in Iceland. It is conceivable that a new generation of young men and women with similar views on leadership, and the role of headteachers are stepping into the arena. If so, only time can tell who or what has changed whom, how and in what ways. Until then, however, I am convinced that it is important to continue illuminating the significance and impact of gender in society.

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Appendix 1

The Schools and their Settings

School	Head Teacher	Deputy	School Established	Student Number	Number of Staff	Location
A	Addi	Anna	1985	320	50	Suburban
B	Asi	Thor	1975	380	60	Inner city
C	Gulla	Thura	2000	390	70	Suburban
D	Gunna	Inga	1955	360	40	Inner city
E	Haddi	Krissa	1950	600	85	Inner city
F	Halli	Kata	1995	750	100	Suburban
G	Krista	X	1960	280	50	Inner city
H	Runa	Baddi	1935	570	70	Inner city
I	Siggi	Maggi	1970	560	90	Suburban
J	Stina	Binna	1965	340	50	Inner city

Appendix 2

Head Teachers and their Background

Head Teacher	Sex	Age	Time as City Heads	Post Graduate Training	Gender of Former Head Teacher
Addi	M	45	10	Educational management	M
Asi	M	50	10	Educational management	F
Gulla	F	40	5	School development	A new school
Gunna	F	60	10	No formal training	F
Haddi	M	50	5	Educational management	F
Halli	M	55	15	No formal training	A new School
Krista	F	65	25	No formal training	M
Runa	F	60	10	No formal training	M
Siggi	M	55	20	No formal training	M
Stina	F	60	15	School assessment	M

Appendix 3

Interview Schedule for Deputy Head Teachers

Changes in school environment

- In your opinion, has the environment of schools changed in the past 10-15 years? If so, in what way?
- Have these changes had an impact on your role as a deputy head? If so, in what way?

Deputy's role and responsibilities

- Can you describe your role as a deputy head?
- What are your main responsibilities?
- Which of your tasks do you perceive as being most important?
- Are you able to prioritize your work in an acceptable way?
- Who are your main co-workers?

Gender and leadership

- Do you believe your gender has an impact on your actions as a deputy head?
- If so, can you give examples?
- Do you believe other people, students, parents, etc. approach you differently because you are a woman/man?
- If so, can you give examples?

Appendix 4

Institute of Education

University of London

PhD Programme

February 2007

Informed Consent A Participation in an Interview Study

Interviewer: Steinunn Helga Lárusdóttir, a doctoral student (PhD), of the Institute of Education, University of London. Also an assistant professor at the Iceland University of Education.

Participant: A head teacher in Reykjavík

Name of the study “Leadership, Values and Gender: A Study of Icelandic Headteachers”. Steinunn Helga Lárusdóttir.

The main purpose of the study is to explore the values underpinning the work of women and men educational leaders and how they impact upon their actions, especially when encountering moral dilemmas. Particular attention is paid to the interplay between leadership, values and gender.

Participation in the research is voluntary, participants can withdraw from the study at any time during the interviews, and ask that certain portions of the interview material will not be used in the thesis. The interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions of the tape recordings will be sent to the participants.

Although anonymity can not be fully guaranteed, the interviewer will protect it with all possible means. The interviewer will transcribe the interviews herself and pseudonym will be used in the transcripts and the thesis. The disk with the recorded interviews and consent form will be kept in a locked closet and data will be destroyed when the thesis has been accepted by examiners.

Steinunn Helga Lárusdóttir

I hereby confirm that I have read the information above and give my consent for participation in the study Leadership, Values and Gender. A Study of Icelandic Headteachers.

Appendix 5

Institute of Education

University of London

PhD Programme

February 2007

Informed Consent

A Participation in an Interview Study

Interviewer: Steinunn Helga Lárusdóttir, a doctoral student (PhD), of the Institute of Education, University of London. Also an assistant professor at the Iceland University of Education.

Participant: A deputy head teacher in Reykjavík

Name of the study “Leadership, Values and Gender: A Study of Icelandic Headteachers”. Steinunn Helga Lárusdóttir.

The main purpose of the study is to explore the values underpinning the work of women and men educational leaders and how they impact upon their actions, especially when encountering moral dilemmas. Particular attention is paid to the interplay between leadership, values and gender.

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Steinunn Helga Lárusdóttir

I hereby confirm that I have read the information above and give my consent for participation in the study Leadership, Values and Gender. A Study of Icelandic Headteachers.

Appendix 6

Head Teachers and their Vignettes

Head Teacher	Critical Incident
Addi	I have been trying to avoid hurting the person. Everybody always remembers your name.
Asi	I did it my way.
Gulla	My conscience was so good. I think that is what made the difference.
Gunna	I am the children’s head teacher.
Haddi	I am not saying that I am loosing sleep because of this but I must admit that I worry.
Halli	I was terrified at the prospect of loosing my teachers.
Krista	This affected us deeply. I am trying to adapt.
Runa	I do not t think [the superintendent] ever really fully understood the gravity of the matter. People were used to this respectable, kind and intelligent man, a male. Cultural messages and construction of leadership identity. The fact that I am a woman may have been the defining factor. Authority questioned.
Siggi	I felt bad for a whole year. Well, it is sort of hard ... to tell somebody that she/he just has to leave. Making the world a little better.
Stina	I feel that I am abusing my staff by making them put up with something which is unacceptable. The inclusion of troubled children. I can not see I had a choice. Pedagogical leader or financial manager. Well, my dear.

Appendix 7

Interview Schedule for Head Teachers

In chapter four I explained and gave a rationale for the way in which I chose to approach headteachers with my research questions. The questions fall into three main categories. The first category, that relating to changes in the environment of schools, helps to establish the context in which their value related dilemmas and other experiences occur. They moreover provide the ground for the the second and third category, that of value related dilemmas and gender related issues. Interwoven was often a discussion about headteachers view on their role and responsibilities.

Changes in school environment

- In your opinion, has the environment of schools changed in the past 5-15 years? If so, in what way?
- Have these changes had an impact on the scope and/or the nature of your role as a head teacher?
- If so, in what way?

Gender and leadership

- Do you believe your gender has an impact on your actions as a head teacher?
- If so, can you give examples?
- Do you believe other people, students, parents, etc. approach you differently because you are a woman/man?
- If so, can you give examples?

Value related dilemmas

- Could you share a few difficult incidents, or dilemmas which you would describe as having been critical and which you have dealt with and either solved or tried to solve

Head Teachers role and responsibilities

- Can you describe your role as a head teacher?
- What are your main responsibilities?
- Which of your tasks do you perceive as being most important?
- Are you able to prioritize your work in an acceptable way?
- Who are your main co-workers?

Appendix 8

School Documents

Below is a list of the main documents pertaining to the schools which are involved in this study. All the schools have a web site. Some of them are long and detailed, while others offer less information. In all instances the web sites contain an example of what is collectively called a *school prospectus*. In most instances the prospectus offers some information about the school's policy, statement, mission, vision, and/or values. Sometimes this information was, however, included in the staff handbooks and/or parent's handbooks which usually contained both practical information and information about school policy. In one instant an article about a school provided valuable insights which had not been gained elsewhere.

School	Head Teacher	School Documents
A	Addi	School prospectus 2005-2006. A web publication
B	Asi	<i>School prospectus 2004-2005</i> . A printed edition <i>Staff handbook 2004-2005</i> . A printed edition
C	Gulla	<i>School prospectus 2005-2006</i> . A web publication, an article. Written by 3 teachers and published in 2003. The article describes the ideology which sparked the original plans behind establishing the school as well as the devolvment of new teaching practices in the school
D	Gunna	<i>School prospectus 2005-2006</i> . A web publication
E	Haddi	<i>School prospectus 2005-2006</i> . A web publication <i>Handbook 2005-2006</i> . A printed publication <i>School newsletter 2006</i> . A printed publication
F	Halli	<i>School prospectus 2006-2007</i> . A web publication <i>Parent's handbook 2005-2006</i> . A printed publication
G	Krista	<i>School Prospectus 2004-2005</i> . A printed publication <i>Our school..</i> A 2005 newsletter, printed publication A newspaper advertisement for head teacher's position in 2006. The school's values are listed, among them <i>respect, ambition</i> and <i>joy</i> A printed pamphlet for stakeholders to help them in their search for common core values
H	Runa	School prospectus. A web publication
I	Siggi	<i>School handbook</i> <i>School prospectus</i>
J	Stina	<i>School prospectus 2004-2005</i> . A printed edition <i>School prospectus 2005-2006</i> . A web publication

Appendix 9

The Main Legal Documents and Policy Texts from State and Municipality which Were Used in the Preparation of this Study

Aðalnámskrá grunnskóla 1999. [The 1999 National Curriculum].

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Appendix 10

Head Teachers and their Examples (mini-vignettes)

Head Teacher	Examples
Addi	
Asi	<p>I have not quite mastered this new reality. The case of the school canteen.</p> <p>Technology has been a handicap for me. With Krista.</p> <p>Every school shall adopt. The trilogy of target setting, monitoring, autonomy. With Runa and Siggi.</p>
Gulla	Perhaps it is the woman in me.
Gunna	I am the children’s headteacher.
Haddi	Wait a Minute! When did we say this? With Krista, Runa, Siggi and Stina.
Halli	
Krista	<p>Technology has been a handicap for me. With Asi.</p> <p>Wait a minute! When did we say this? With Runa, Siggi, Stina.</p>
Runa	<p>Wait a minute! When did we say this? With Haddi, Krista, Siggi, Stina.</p> <p>Every school shall adopt. The trilogy of target setting, monitoring, autonomy. With Asi and Siggi.</p>
Siggi	Every school shall adopt.The trilogy of target setting, monitoring, and autonomy. With Asi and Runa.
Stina	

Appendix 11

An Example of a Transcribed Interview Held on 29th April 2005

Steinunn Helga: Thank you for accepting to be interviewed again. Do you think now would be the time to discuss difficult issues you have dealt with since you assumed headship? If you like we can do both, continue our discussion about the role of head teachers and how it has changed and then discuss value related conflicts.

Yes, that sounds good. When I took over in 1994 I had, of course, been working side by side, with my predecessor, who had been in headship for 30 years, if my memory does not fail me. Of course I had seen the way he worked and took part in it but he did, however, never allow me to become close as a professional partner. He held quite tight to his tasks and based his actions very much on his own principles and it seems to me that he was very independent in his decisions and perhaps that is the way things were done in these days. This is the atmosphere I step into and even if we had been working together side my side - when I reflect upon the situation now, it seems to me that I was not as well prepared as I should have been.

Steinunn Helga: Yes, you had been his deputy head...?

I was his deputy head for years and even if we were really good friends, he was reluctant, all the time we worked together, to hand over to me the kind of tasks that I found the most interesting and worthy. It seems to me that I spent the first two years [after assuming headship] orienting myself to the role. This was of course a huge project, both the running of the school and the day care because my headteacher was among the first in the city to offer this service and of course as time passed all kinds of things came up. I do not want anyone to think that I am slandering about my former head teacher but there is one particular incident that is worth mentioning here. There were grade levels which had never received the prescribed hours in subjects such as home economics and swimming. Our rationale was that by dividing the classes in half they were getting higher-quality teaching, even if it meant fewer contact hours.

Steinunn Helga: Had parents complained about this?

No, they had not, they had ignored the situation for years but during this transition period while I was taking over from my predecessor, parents' councils were established by law and their first action after I became a head teacher was to complain formally and this ended with formal indictment. We tried as well as we could to explain, that as far as this school year went, we would not be able to change anything and this would take some time to implement but to no avail. For this we were indicted, or I was, in my second year of headship. I found this somewhat typical of the problems I encountered, because this was not the only one although it can be seen as the most serious one and I don't want to give the impression that I was some kind of a victim. In my opinion people thought the time had come to "tidy things up" and they decided not to confront my predecessor. When, however, I took over, then an entirely different situation came up. And I'm not saying this was done out of disrespect, but this is worth reflecting on and all these years this has regularly crossed my mind and I have thought long and hard about this. Of course enormous changes followed the transfer of schools from the state to municipalities and we experienced this new reality but when we are talking about changes in the role of headteachers it is not always easy to decide what exactly brought each one of them about. I stepped into this arena [as a head teacher] exactly as these transitions are taking place. I experienced tremendous changes in the role of head teachers and I think that from the very beginning the demands on me were quite different from those of before - although these changes, which I found enormous, had began while I was still a deputy head teacher, I believe that the demands on me were different to those made on my predecessor. It was as if I was being pushed much harder by the parent community.

Steinunn Helga: It is interesting, in light of what you said earlier about people having become impatient to see changes. Do you think these demands had something to do with you being a woman, and a successor of a male head or if parents had stepped forward regardless of the headteachers' gender?

I have thought a lot about this, whether possibly the fact that I am a woman may have been the defining factor, I was, after all not exactly a teenager. I was just about to turn 50.

People were used to this respectable, kind and intelligent man – a male. To them he had been an authority figure for decades, he was only around 30 years old when he became a head teacher. But I also think people did not find me particularly authoritative in my first year in headship. I expect that I have gained much more authority today. I may not have been particularly secure in my role, I was not, even if I tried not to let it show.

When I step in, even if I had been teaching here for a very long time, and if I may say so, my reputation was good. I also believed I was doing well as a deputy head and my relations with staff and parents had been pleasant although it was always my predecessor who was indisputably the authority, during those eight years [while she was a deputy head teacher], I was always just by his side and a few steps behind.

Steinunn Helga: Do you see this incident in some way as related to the changes that schools and headteachers were facing at the time.

Yes, yes I do.

Steinunn Helga: You are indicted because the pupils are not receiving the prescribed hours ...?

Yes, yes, even if we had demonstrated that we were moving in the right direction-and perhaps it is because you are stepping into your own environment as a manager, which is one of the dimensions in all of this. We just did not have the courage, I can easily admit this now, we didn't venture to confront our own people. We should have been a little more radical.

Steinunn Helga: Yes, all of this is quite interesting. Is there anything else you would like to add to your discussion of your first years in headship and your encounter with parents because of class size or do you want to move on to a different issue.

I think we should move to another issue, which is connected to this one, one which I will always remember. This was also something that happened in my first years of headship. We [the head teachers and deputy heads] were having our last meeting of the school year with the superintendent and at that meeting I asked to be allowed to speak because I had recently received a letter from the Ministry [of Education and Science]. The letter had originally been sent to the municipality, probably to the city mayor, who then sent it to his superintendent and she, instead of sending it to me or discuss it with me, sent it, I suppose as an admonition or a warning, to all the headteachers in the city to inform them about the consequences if they were not careful and stopped dividing

classes in two. As far as I can remember, I do not remember having received a letter [from the superintendency] to explain the decision although it almost certainly was sent-, I do not remember this. It was, however, explained to the other headteachers why they were receiving the letter. Actually I was later visited by the superintendency and received an apology.

Steinunn Helga: Did you comment or complain about the dissemination of the letter to all the heads in the city?

I only commented once. I'm sure it has been documented somewhere, at a meeting in the spring and by then, if I remember correctly, I had asked to speak about this particular issue, even though I could hardly find my voice. Even now, I still become emotional when I think back to this time.

Yes, and she [the superintendent] reacted, if I remember this correctly, she apologized or explained why she had acted the way she did... that this had been an interesting example, or something like that, of the ways issues were currently dealt with [by parents and the state] and said the matter was worth consideration. I do not remember this clearly any longer, and possibly I am mixing up her comments at the meeting and other comments to me on an earlier occasion, but she clearly had not realized that this [sending out the letter] would be something-, although I would expect that just about anyone, would have felt bad about this, and personally, I felt that this was almost like a personal assault or at least extremely personally intrusive. She did not ask for my permission to disseminate the letter or at least tell me about it beforehand in a manner she did in relation to one of my colleagues who was indicted because of the way she interpreted and implemented the last teachers contract. I don't think [the superintendent] ever really understood the gravity of the matter.

Steinunn Helga: Should we turn back to discussing the changes in schools environment? Do you think there are issues we need to address further?

Yes, one of the dimensions relating to these changes which I and my colleagues agreed on, was what we saw as an increased interest in schools and schooling following the transfer from state to municipalities. The municipalities became more ambitious and this has had an impact on the schools but at the same time, of course, new tasks were transferred to headteachers, the scope has increased as we have become responsible for the hiring and firing of staff, and gradually we have also taken over everything related to the financing. All this time I and my colleagues have talked a lot about how new

tasks were piling up and this was a feeling which was shared equally by the most experienced headteachers and the newcomers.

Steinunn Helga: And this happens after the schools are transferred to the municipalities?

Yes, the work load, just from the first day I began in this job.

Steinunn Helga: What years exactly are you taking about?

I think 1994 and 1995. I think that partly, what I am dealing with and have already described, taking over from my predecessor and the experiences I go through in this school community, all of this has become somewhat lighter two years later when the schools are transferred. This is a little blurred in my mind, but it seems as if the work load was just enormous and that it did not begin to ease until we got the middle managers. I do not remember exactly when that was, 2000 or 2001, how long have I been in headship? Yes, I think we have had heads of departments here for about four years. This school was not in the first group of schools to get middle managers, there were several schools in the first group but my school was included already the year after the first trial year.

Steinunn Helga: And do they really make a difference?

Yes, they do. I could have retired last year although I would only have received 64% of my current salaries which makes a difference. For many years, even if I was so absolutely absorbed by it, I thought I would stay in this position for 10 years, and do my best, to do well on the job. But I think that perhaps, this change which came with the middle managers, I doubt that I and the other head teachers have really been grateful enough for this, that school authorities did have the foresight to do this. Of course there had been a long lasting discussion about head teachers and their enormous work load but at least the situation was acted upon, relatively soon and I really think this made enormous difference.

Steinunn Helga: Would you say that even if the scope of your work has increased this extra man power has sufficed to bring your work load into balance?

Yes, I think, earlier, all I could do was to try and keep the situation under control and not even that. In spite of the absolutely enormous work load it was not until the arrival of the middle managers, that we could begin catching up on tasks which had not been

taken care of earlier. They [the middle managers] were, of course chosen from our staff, which means that I was involved in the hiring of them and besides they were interested in the role and volunteered for it which meant that this became a very good professional group.

Steinunn Helga: What kind of tasks are you referring to in particular?

I do not know what to mention particularly. For instance, welcoming new pupils and staff in the autumn, and developing a new school handbook, continue the work on our school prospectus, and just developing many work processes, yes and meet some of the requirements which schools were expected to meet following the 1995 Education Act. You know, like you mentioned earlier, society has changed, and it can be really complicated to sort out where the various changes originate and perhaps that is irrelevant. These changes have called for more effectiveness and responsiveness to various issues that come up.

Steinunn Helga: Does this mean more or additional monitoring of the work?

Yes, we are getting more questionnaires from the municipality where we are requested to provide information about various issues. Much of this is of course connected to the annual policy statement [from the municipality] which is in many ways used as a check list.

Steinunn Helga: Checklist for ??

Yes, for instance, we are asked if we are participating in the literary project in classes 1-3 and on the bases of this information from the schools, reports are published. The school is moreover asked if it is participating in a particular mathematic project and this is – they do not call us and ask directly when on earth we are going to join in this or that project but of course this [the questionnaires] means that we are under pressure. These examples are probably not the most serious ones, but yes, yes, in various ways monitoring of our work has increased considerably. This has both benefits and drawbacks. There has been a lot of talk among headteachers in the city, for instance the heads in this particular school district. We have discussed the autonomy which schools are said to have now, but we do not necessarily agree that they enjoy in reality. On one occasion we managed to discuss this honestly with the superintendent and we think it was fruitful.

Steinunn Helga: Do you, the heads, think that you have a mutual understanding on the issue of autonomy with the superintendent?

Yes, yes, as an example I can mention the annual policy statement. It is published on a yearly basis, with all its guiding lights, let's see, I have it here somewhere. When I'm talking to my teachers about our obligations, we have the legal duty to base our work on the *National Curriculum*. We also have an obligation to work in accordance with our own school curriculum which we have written with reference to the National Curriculum as well as the annual policy from the municipality which involves various requirements and at the moment it is differentiated learning which is emphasized. Differentiated learning has been introduced as a long term target for the next 10 years as well as a 3 year, and a one year target. Supposedly this document, the guiding light, was written in cooperation with the head teachers, this has been highlighted and of course we discuss next years policy statement at our meetings but the truth is that these ideas are first and foremost introduced and promoted by the superintendent who has this vision. Yes- and of course, we see that this policy has various benefits and it is as if somebody [like the superintendent] has a strong conviction and a strong will and at least some of the headteachers do as well, then it sort of happens that others who may not all be that interested, then it is like there is only one will, or desire. This [differentiated instruction] is of course what has been happening in the neighbouring countries, at least we are told it is, and I have also seen it in my various school visits abroad. In these visits we have seen that this ideology [differentiated instruction] is on the agenda and this impacts upon us and this means that whether you like it or not, or should I say whether you are interested or not, then you are somehow drawn into this ideology. In addition to these aims, every school district sets down educational goals for that particular school area. This is something which began a few years ago and gradually increased and then, like often happens, the steps we were required to take, became more numerous and this consequently called for more work on behalf of the head teachers. We were being asked what we [the schools in each area] intended to do, collectively, about this and that. From early on, we, in this school district became dissatisfied with this and very soon we told the local education authorities that we thought this called for considerable extra work on our behalf. The schools in this area are in many ways different but this varies between school areas, in some cases all the schools are new, and we soon realized that this arrangement might be better suited for them and their needs than ours. In this area we have many old traditions and some of the things we were expected to take up were

not necessarily helpful. However, it was not until two or three years ago that we really began to show our opposition at our meetings with the superintendent. We have an annual meeting with the superintendent in each school district. Such a meeting was held here in this school last year, it's barely a year since, that was perhaps the first time we laid down our complaints formally, or aired our common dissatisfaction with this kind of work procedure, that we felt that our professional autonomy was being restricted. Even if this [the annual policy statement] had been put together by us collectively, the policy came from elsewhere. We received letters where we were asked: what have you, in this school area, intended to do about this? And what about this? What do you collectively, see as your next steps on this issue, differentiated instruction or cooperative learning? What have you intended to do about the inclusive school policy, etc. etc. ? Of course your hands have been tied and you have been told what your next steps are to be. In my opinion, and this has been discussed in head teachers meetings , I clearly remember this from last year when we were discussing the next annual policy document. At that meeting, one of our colleagues spoke about this, on our behalf and representatives from other school areas did as well because we meet within the districts and it was stated quite clearly that this was as far as we would go.

Steinunn Helga: Yes, and do you believe the situation has since, changed for the better?

Yes, yes, and this development, somehow, was turned around but through the years, we have discussed and questioned this school autonomy which we are supposed to have. I think we sense a lot of difference from before although I am not arguing that everything was perfect before 1990, that everything was perfect then. But when I talk about monitoring then there are of course all these questionnaires, at the moment for instance we are answering what is called, school climate survey. It involves ...and questions about the head teacher, rather detailed in fact, this is pointed at her/him to and then the focus is on various dimensions. Every other year parents are sent a questionnaire where they are asked about their opinion about the schools and this does of course cause enormous comparison between all the schools in the city. Well it is not quite as extensive as it was in the beginning, that was a kind of an adventure, [information about each school was revealed to all the other schools] if I allow myself to phrase it a little carelessly, but now we can see how our school is doing in comparison with all the schools in the city as well as just other schools in the area.

Steinunn Helga: Is this beneficial?

Yes, I must say it is, at least as long as I am left alone with what is going on here in our schools. It was-because I was mentioning –well it really does not matter-, you will just have to “rewind” depending on how much time you have. I have come to think of our first school/parent evening, when was it, was it in the year 2000?

This was at a time when the third parent questionnaire had been sent out and then this school was not doing so well, the administration of the school was not considered good enough, compared to the average school. In 2002, however, then we clearly scored well above the average, quite clearly and we were simply doing well, two years later.

Steinunn Helga: Did this positive change come with the middle managers or -?

Partly it did. Of course there are many other causes such as how long it took me, a long time to develop in the role- I feel as if in the past 4-5 years I have been enjoying myself much more, I think I’m sure you know what I mean. I think, sometimes I felt as ..sometimes I felt like I was drowning but now I do not feel like this any longer but the work load is heavy and the conflicting demands continue to wear you down. This is a lot of work and I do not manage to do everything I want to and I still have work left which I have been unable to attend to such as the school assessment [required by law since 1995] which is in the preparatory phases- but even if the conflicting demands continue, this feeling of suffocation has disappeared, I’m probably being a little dramatic here. I don’t know if my train of thought fits into our discussion and I may be a little careless to talk like this but I do have the feeling that I have not managed to prioritize the professional dimension of my job, curriculum development and issues relating to instruction, a development which is not quite how I would have wanted it to be. My middle managers are more or less responsible for this part of the school leadership.

Steinunn Helga: Is this unavoidable, do you think?

I think so. The additional administration and the individuals who are responsible for it, they are extremely important and as long as we share a similar vision for the school and where we are heading with our work, this should be ok. Of course I have an impact on the professional development through conversations with people and in meetings with teaching staff and middle managers. We [the senior management team] put forward the main emphasis in our school policy and I try to be visible and to keep up with the work

within the school. If I am going to be the educational leader I want to be it is certainly very important that this delegation of my work does not cause me to lose sight of our vision and most important tasks.

Steinunn Helga: And so you think that you are able to put forward the main guidelines for the school?

Yes, I believe so. In the past three years and this current school year we are spending more on administrative tasks than we strictly speaking can afford in terms of our budget. Truth be told, we decided to take firm action in relation to the administration of the school, particularly for one year. We did, however, miscalculate and thought we were saving money elsewhere but that turned out to be a misunderstanding and this means that there will be cut backs next year. We might therefore not have the money for department heads next year.

